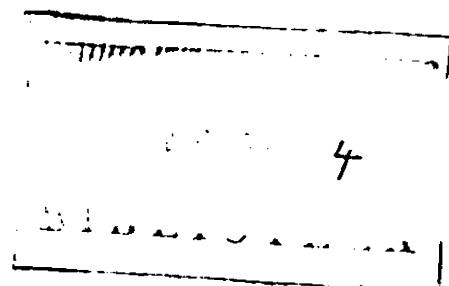




# European University Institute

Department of Social and Political Sciences



## Translating literature

From romanticized representations to the dominance of a commercial logic:  
the publication of Italian novels in France (1982-2001)

*Anaïs Bokobza*

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of  
Doctor of the European University Institute

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## Acknowledgments

This thesis is the result of more than three years of work at the European University Institute. Overall, it has been a rather lonely activity. Nonetheless, I had the chance to benefit from the help and support of a certain number of people, whom I am grateful to.

First of all, I thank Professor Peter Wagner for having supervised my thesis. He has always trusted me and listened to me. His comments and suggestions were always precise and helpful, not to mention his ability to put my questions into theoretical perspective. I am very grateful to him for his precious and kind help.

Professor Johan Heilbron accepted to be my co-supervisor, and his knowledge of my field of investigation has been very precious. I warmly thank him for all his support.

I am very grateful to Professors Pier Paolo Giglioli and Michael Werner to have accepted to bring new perspectives to my work thanks to their acute reading.

I wish to thank all the people with whom I conducted interviews for their availability and kindness, as well as the publishers who gave granted me access to their archives.

Finally, all the people who are dear to me should know how much I owe them. Without your help, patience, support and trust, I would not have made it. I particularly thank all those who took the time to read my work (although it was in English) and kindly comment on it. Overall, I enjoyed this experience very much. However, even though it has been exciting in many respects, I swear there will never be a second thesis...



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## Introduction

### 1. THE PUBLICATION OF ITALIAN NOVELS IN FRANCE: A SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

Today, cultural relations are becoming increasingly international, particularly due to the evolution of the means of communication. At the European level, this process is strengthened by the opening of frontiers between States. These transformations are part of the so-called "globalisation", a notion that refers to the increasing movements of goods, services, labour, technology and capital at the international level. This is not a recent phenomenon, however its pace has become quickened with the development of new technologies, especially in the field of communications. It was first used to convey an economic phenomenon, but it also applies to other fields. Especially, the cultural aspects of globalisation have not yet become the object of many studies in social sciences: however, the progressive standardization of worldwide goods takes place at both the level of production and consumption. As a consequence of cultural globalisation, an increasing number of foreign books are available on the national markets. Books constitute an interesting category of cultural goods, for several reasons. Firstly, their specificity is that they cannot be produced outside a linguistic context. They are written in one language and – in most cases – they are published in their author's own country. Secondly, due to the translation costs, they are expensive products, which implies that they do not move so easily across borders. Finally, the production and publication of books do not usually occur in more than one country, even if they are published by multinational firms. Nevertheless, the increasing exportation of books – i.e. translation and publication abroad – is an integral part of what we call cultural globalisation, and thus it represents a good subject for analysis.

Since the 1980s, deep transformations have been occurring in the editorial worlds in most Western countries. For instance, the familial type of power that used to prevail in France is giving way to a more and more concentrated economy (Reynaud, 1999). This induces changes at several levels (such as the functioning of the system, the choice of publications, the reception of foreign books). In their analysis of the careers of the nineteenth century painters, White and White describe the decline of the French academic system that relied on fine arts until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the introduction of a dealer-critic system (which contributed to the success of the impressionist revolution) and the aesthetic and technical innovations in painting

(White & White, 1965). They describe the transition from a monopolistic situation to a diversified system based on the increasing importance of the dealer-critics and professional critics. In this context, the art market was becoming the dominant framework for the evaluation and commercialisation of new movements. Today, the transformations in the book market are going in the opposite direction as the publishing world is characterised by the increasing domination of one system – the commercial one – to the detriment of the variety of systems (and types of recognition) which used to be prevalent. This system coexists with the previous system of selection and recognition of books, but it is progressively dominating the other, which we will refer to as the 'symbolic' system. Moreover, there is currently a neat opposition between the small independent publishers on the one hand, and the larger commercial ones on the other.<sup>1</sup>

These transformations in the national and international cultural context raise different theoretical issues regarding the publication of foreign books. Firstly, we can question the way of functioning of cultural industries, and more specifically the book industry, to the extent that there have been some changes in the activities of the publishers. Secondly, the act of translation, understood symbolically as well as practically, relates to trans-national exchanges. It is a multi-faceted activity that addresses the "proof of the foreign" (Berman, 1984), namely the way that a text is translated from one culture to another and received in the target culture. Finally, it raises the question of collective cultural representations, namely how the reception of foreign literature in a national (or at least linguistic) context is linked to historically rooted images of a foreign culture.

In the thesis, one type of book flow shall be analysed, namely the publication of Italian literature in France, focusing on one type of literature, the narrative fiction (novels and short stories). This research was inspired by a simple observation: there are more publications of Italian books in France nowadays in comparison with the period before the 1980s. This statement referred to an increase, there was a "before" (a past situation) and an "after" (the present situation). Further questioning led us to observe that this increase was radical rather than progressive. In fact, as we will see in the first chapter of this dissertation, there was a rather sudden augmentation of the publications in the first half of the 1980s. Initially, we assumed that this rise had been slow and continuous, and thus that it would be difficult to choose a starting date. On the contrary, the situation is much neater than expected: between 1900 and 1984, there had never been more than

---

<sup>1</sup> This distinction and the different editorial logics that it conveys, will be developed in this dissertation (especially in chapter one).

forty publications in a year; from 1988 onwards, at least seventy were published every year.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it makes sense to view the last two decades as a whole, to the extent that it comes after a turning-point, or at least some type of change. The analysis of the causes of the change will form part of the description of the situation, but it is not the main focus of the research. In fact, our aim is to understand on what grounds the publication of Italian novels in France are made today, and which representations they correspond to (such as representations of Italy, literature, or the public). We will focus on a very detailed description of the mechanisms of publication (as presented by the actors themselves, and also through an analysis of the types of books published and some specific authors). In this context, it will be argued that the accurate analysis of this type of cultural flow can help to define a new way of perceiving the globalisation of cultural exchanges.

The choice of a case study inevitably raises a certain number of problems. Firstly, it must be justified why this case was chosen over another. Secondly, we need to keep in mind the specificities of the case study with regards to the overall transformations or mechanisms at stake. One of the reasons for choosing the publication of Italian literature in France as a case study of literary flows is based on the particular links which exist between these two countries, including cultural links, and historically there have been some changing relationships and expectations as far as culture and literature were concerned. Italian culture has always been an important point of reference for France, at least until the *Rinascimento*. However, in the seventeenth century, apart from a few exceptions (Caravaggio, Bernin, some musicians), Italy ceased to be a scientific and cultural model for France, and it came to be represented as a static culture that no longer continued to be creative (Romano, 1989). It could be argued that this unbalanced relationship lasted until the twentieth century. For exemple, in the 1980s, Italy translated on average six hundred French books per year, whereas France translated only ninety from Italian. During the same period, 850,000 pupils of Italian high schools were learning French, whereas only 120,000 French scholars had chosen to learn Italian (Romano, 1989). Our research does not aim to identify the causes inherent in the specificities of the case chosen and those pertaining to more global processes. On the contrary, we argue that the description and understanding of such processes only make sense in a specific cultural and socio-economic context. Furthermore, the analysis of literary exchanges as symbols and products of a more complex relationship between

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Valin (1991, 2002), Index Translationum (UNESCO), French National Bibliography (see Annex 1 for the description of these sources). Besides, there could be a problem with the publications statistics between the beginning of the 1980s and 1987. Consequently, we cannot date precisely the beginning of the increase; however, even if it took place in 4 or 5 years, it is extremely short compared to the period of reference, a whole century. For further details on the problems of measurement of publications, see Annex 2.

two countries relies on the implicit idea that the social sciences are able to provide tools and concepts for understanding cultural globalisation as a socio-economic reality.

We also need to justify our choice to analyse only one type of translations, the narrative fictions. The main explanation pertains to the unity of the publishing field. In fact, the publication of poetry and theatre mobilises specific networks of specialists who are usually not interested in novels. Therefore, it seemed more interesting from our perspective to focus on one field – the largest – rather than to consider several fields that do not overlap with each other. Furthermore, in order to analyse the growing influence of the commercial logic on the editorial decisions, it made more sense to look at novels, as they are read by a much larger public than the other literary genres.

The phenomenon that we shall analyse is composed of several dimensions, and it is also the product of the action of several individuals.<sup>1</sup> In order to define the limits of our inquiry, we will have to elucidate these micro-phenomena which altogether constitute the publication of Italian literature in France. At this stage, a note on terminology should be given: we use the term "publication" rather than "translation" of Italian literature into French, because we shall go beyond a simple analysis of the translating process which is usually defined in linguistic studies, where the focus is rather on what happens to a text when it is translated (and thereby transformed, converted and re-created). These studies frequently compare the original and the translated text in order to offer a linguistic analysis of the relationship between two languages and to decipher the nature of the work carried out by the translator and their implications in terms of translation techniques. However, our analysis will not be limited to the publication process only as our purpose is to look at the social mechanisms leading to the publication, such as why is a book translated, how does this occur, and what happens afterwards? It appears that translation is part of the publication process and we will analyse it as such, in other words as the operation that distinguishes foreign books from others. We will thus look at who the translators from Italian are and at the nature of their relationship with the publishing world (in particular with publishers). In fact, we can assume that the increase in the publications has had an impact on the number of translators and on the nature of their doings. For instance, we can examine whether translation is their main activity. The analysis of the role of translators in the publications will form an integral part of our understanding of the functioning of the publishing world.

The introduction of Italian literature in France not only concerns the book market – strictly speaking –, but also "the organisational settings in which the books are produced" (Coser, 1982:

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<sup>1</sup> See Durkheim, (1986): being the product of the action of several individuals is one of the necessary conditions for a phenomenon to be defined as "social fact".

3). This includes all of the agents (such as translators, publishers, critiques, agents and even the public) who participate in some way in the decisions leading to the publication of Italian books in France. The context in which they make choices is not exclusively literary, but brings various economic, social and cultural factors into play. Within the publishing world, translation is a singular product: it is not the result of the usual "institutional settings" (Bourdieu, 1999: 3), such as the reading committees and the different readers, directors of collections and publishers. In the case of foreign books, the translators' role is crucial because they often propose the books for translation and their legitimacy in the field allows them to distinguish between 'publishable' and 'non-publishable' books. In fact, the selection of foreign books follows a different process than the one leading to the selection of national books. Nonetheless, the issues at stake are similar and therefore, looking at translations allows us to draw general conclusions regarding the selection of books because it is similar to a condensed version of the publication process: *"La politique en matière de littérature étrangère offre sans doute une image grossie de ce qui s'observe dans les stratégies de publication des écrivains nationaux"* (Bourdieu, 1999: 23).

A transformation in the publications of Italian novels has occurred in France since the beginning of the 1980s. As we mentioned above, the number of yearly publications has significantly increased since the beginning of the 1980, and although it has gone through many variations, it has remained at a much higher level than before the 1980s. This takes place in the context described above of the intensification of worldwide flows in cultural goods, and we will thus argue that our case study is one example of the application of the so-called cultural globalisation. Nonetheless, it is impossible to perceive this evolution without looking into the history of Franco-Italian cultural relationships. Consequently, we shall try to understand how the mechanisms of the publication of Italian novels in France in the past two decades can be described and analysed in a comprehensive way. In particular, we are interested in the importance of the commercial logic in these mechanisms.

There is, thus, a tension between the issue of the increasing importance of the commercial logic in editorial decisions on the one hand, and the questions raised by the exploration of the mechanisms involved in the publication of Italian novels in France on the other. We shall test the hypothesis that the major outcome of our analysis of these mechanisms is linked to the progressive dominance of a commercial logic and the way in which it interferes in editorial decisions. This issue will be a key focus of this study, however, it will be argued that it cannot be fully understood without an in-depth exploration of these mechanisms, as it has come to replace a logic which was based on a certain type of representations of Italy and literary value. This trend

is at the forefront of our analysis, however it only makes sense in the context of an in-depth and exhaustive exploration of the publications of Italian novels in France. At a theoretical level, the issues we want to deal with can be synthesised in three questions:

- how can we relate micro-events (bi-national literary exchanges) and macro-events (the process of cultural globalisation)?
- how important are cultural representations in the cultural exchanges?
- how does the commercial logic influence the functioning of cultural industries?

At an empirical level, these issues raise specific concerns:

- how has the publication of Italian novels in France changed in the past two decades?
- how have the representations of Italy and Italian literature evolved during this period?
- how has commercial logic progressively gained importance in the publishing world, especially in editorial decisions?

Consequently, we will not try to single out specific causes, but instead the evolution referred to above will be considered as a multi-layered whole. It will be argued that the variety of dimensions of this phenomenon calls for a wide variety of materials and methods of analysis. The methodological frame will be presented below, and further reference to other methodological issues will be included throughout the dissertation – particularly in the theoretical chapter. Due to the methodological complexity and to the extent that this phenomenon is intrinsically related to the complexity of our subject, it cannot be analysed separately from the context of the theoretical framework. In relation to this, it is indispensable to introduce another multi-dimension aspect of this work, namely the fields of research that the subject touches upon.

## **2. A SUBJECT AT THE BORDERS OF SEVERAL FIELDS OF RESEARCH**

In the usual academic division of labour, our topic pertains to a wide range of fields of research. We suggest that an overview of the domains that we will touch upon is a necessary basis for constructing a theoretical framework of analysis. As a prelude, we will see that analysis of literary exchanges between two countries is not very common in the social sciences. In this context, two articles that were published in the French journal *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* in December 1999. The first was written by Chalmers (1999), who is interested in the dissemination of German literature and, more precisely, in the image of German writers in Great Britain. The second article (Jurt, 1999) examines the introduction of French literature into Germany and it questions the role played by translation and the extent to which it is a good intermediary for cultural exchanges.

These two articles thus raise issues that are linked to our research questions, even though they deal with other countries. We can also mention Cornelis W. Schoneveld's work on the translation of English literature in Holland in the seventeenth century (Schoneveld, 1983), and the work by Vanderauwera (1985) dealing with the opposite process, namely the translation of Dutch novels into English.

If the literature on bicultural literary exchanges is not well developed, the situation is even worse for the specific analysis of the introduction of Italian literature in France. However, if we also look at other disciplines, such as history or linguistics, the situation is surprisingly better. There are some long-term analyses on this topic, which mainly deal with the reception of Italian literature in France from a linguistic perspective (including history of critique, problems raised by the existence of different translations of the same book, relationships between the translator, the writer and the reader) rather than with the process of diffusion itself, in other words, the networks of relationships involved in the diffusion of translated books. The two main works in this field (Colin, 1995 and 1996) are both structured diachronically, from the sixteenth century to the present day. There are a few studies pertaining exclusively to previous centuries<sup>1</sup> that can be consulted in order to have a more extensive background, however, *a priori*, this type of work is not necessary for the purposes of this thesis. We can also find sections on the literary exchanges in general historical works about Franco-Italian relationships (Milza, 1981). With regard to the twentieth century, there are three main studies directly related to the French translation of Italian literature, Valin (2002), Bec (1991) and Viallet (1986). All of these studies use the *Index Translationum* published by Unesco as a source.<sup>2</sup>

The range of cultural issues covered by the social sciences is extremely broad and there are thus many fields that overlap with our subject. First, we can mention the works which deal with translators and translation. As regards the former, this includes some works on the translators from Italian to French, such as Colin (1996) and Heinich (1984), on French translators in general), which are relevant for the perspective of the interviews which will be carried out with some translators. The latter requires a more detailed presentation. All of the works on translation are brought together under the title of 'translation Studies' – regardless of whether they belong to linguistics, literary studies, history, anthropology, psychology, economics or sociology. In the 1980s, 'translation studies' became a separate discipline. In the theoretical chapter one of these areas, called polysystem theories, shall be explored. At present, we shall simply elucidate the

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<sup>1</sup> For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Della Valle (1986). For the nineteenth century, see Barbier (1981) and Colin (1988).

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 1 for description of the different sources and their respective advantages and disadvantages.

differences between 'translation studies' and 'translation theory'. "Translation studies thus has two main objectives: (1) to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience, and (2) to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted. The two branches of pure translation studies concerning themselves with these objectives can be designated *descriptive translation studies* (DTS) or *translation description* (TD) and *theoretical translation studies* (ThTS) or *translation theory* (TTh)" (Holmes, 1988). It thus appears that 'translation theory' is a branch of 'translation studies', the one that is closely related to my work as it is largely a sociological approach. In particular, we are interested in translation theories formulated from the 1970s onwards by Itamar Even-Zohar, who first introduced the notion of polysystems, and Gideon Toury (1980) who adopted this concept and elaborated on the notion of translation 'norms' which govern translation decisions.<sup>1</sup> The theoretical framework offered is interesting to the extent that it allows this research to act as a case study and consequently, this framework provides a mechanism for the possible generalisation of results. There are also a few recent works that are somehow in line with polysystem theories, with applications in the fields of language and cultural flows. In this context, we are referring to Johan Heilbron's articles (1996, 1999 and 2001) and some works on transnational society (De Swaan, 1993), (Schott, 1991), (Laitin, 2000).

Another relevant field from our perspective is the description of various types of transformations of cultural spheres. This means that our study is related to the analysis of an "art world", as defined by Becker (1992). He explains how the conventions which rule the creation and interpretation of the symbols that shared by all of the members of a same "world" are elaborated and transmitted. This concept allows us to treat cultural worlds as relatively autonomous spheres and, thus, to analyse the consequences of more general transformations on their functioning. From the studies of these kinds of transformations, notable examples include Harrisson and Cynthia White's analysis of the world of French painting in the nineteenth century (White and White, 1991), which deals with profound changes such as the decline of the academic organisation of careers or the implementation of a merchant system which contributed to the success of the impressionist revolution. Diana Crane's work on the reward system in the avant-garde art world in New York is also worth mentioning, as it consists of an analysis of the consequences of the changing role of museums in artistic careers and in the reception of works of art by the public (Crane, 1987). Raymonde Moulin's pioneering work on the market for fine arts in France in the 1970s (Moulin, 1967), Vera Zolberg's study of the professionalisation of American museums and of how they have adapted to public demand (Zolberg, 1983), and Marcia

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<sup>1</sup> For a synthetic and clear presentation of the Polysystem Theories in particular and Translation Studies in general, see Gentzler, 1993 (especially pp. 105-143).



Bystryn's description of the relationships between gallery sponsors and the development of a new style in New York at the end of the 1940s (Bystryn, 1978) are further examples of this type of work. Finally, Bourdieu's work on the genesis of the literary field should also be mentioned (Bourdieu, 1992). He describes the successive configurations of its structure in the nineteenth century, which was the period when a literary and artistic universe was created that was free from the constraints of state bureaucracy.

Following this, it is necessary to discuss the field of the sociology of books and publishing. The most famous work in French history of books (Chartier, 1982) is extremely exhaustive as far as French literature is concerned, but it does not deal with the question of translations. This is a common feature of historical studies on publishing. However, recent analyses tend to focus more on this dimension (Bourdieu, 1999) (Fouché, 1998) (Coser, Kadushin, et al. 1982). In addition, these recent studies also integrate the functioning of publishing houses into the general study of book flows. In the past two decades, there has been a multiplication of studies on the book market that emphasize the growing importance of economic concerns (through the increased number of publishing houses that belong to financial groups): Reynaud (1999), Mollier (2002) and Brémond (2002) for the French market, Schiffrin (1999) for the American market, Gedin (1982) or Curwen (1986) in a more global perspective.

The last category of literature that we will deal with relates to the French intellectual environment and this can be used as a basis for understanding the changes in the French publishing world at the end of the twentieth century. There are many books on this topic, such as the works by Priscilla Clark (Clark, 1987) or Niilo Kauppi (Kauppi, 1996) which gained a certain prestige for their objective description of the French intellectual world, and also the more historical analysis carried out by Sirinelli (Sirinelli, 1990). From a more critical perspective, the main study is that by Hamon and Rotman (Hamon, Rotman, 1981) on a category - called '*intellocrates*' - which refers to the French intellectual decision-makers. Although it was highly controversial at first because the authors shed light on the mechanisms leading to decisions and on the way of life of these '*intellocrates*', this book remains interesting as it helps us to understand the way in which the publishing and intellectual worlds operate.

The subject of this thesis is thus at the border of at least four fields of research: translation and translators, the transformation of cultural spheres and industries, the sociology and history of books and publishing and the French intellectual environment. Therefore, due to the multidimensional nature of our analysis, it will be necessary to adopt multiple methodologies in order to provide a framework of our approach.

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. A broad multi-methods approach

This research aims to describe and understand the mechanisms and representations which led to the publication of Italian novels in France in the context of the intensification and acceleration of international cultural exchanges, which had a significant impact on the national book markets. This section aims to present the methodological framework which will be used both conceptually and empirically.<sup>1</sup> The specificity of our approach is that it combines different types of material, which were analysed using different methods. As we saw above, our subject does not belong to a definite type of sociological field, it is at the border of different types of analyses. In fact, there are several levels of understanding of the publication of Italian novels into French in the last two decades, and each level requires the collection and analysis of a specific kind of material. A specific method is chosen for each type of material, according to the needs of our research question. It is important to emphasize the difference between methods and materials: different methods can be applied to the same sets of data, and the same methods can be applied to several types of material. For instance, discourse analysis can be applied to newspaper articles or transcribed interviews while, at the same time, a text can be analysed qualitatively (for instance using narrative analysis) or quantitatively (counting the number of times that a word occurs).

Nevertheless, despite the organised aspect of the presentation of these methodologies, it is crucial to note that a pre-constructed methodological frame has not been used. In fact, a broad multi-methods approach is, by definition, a combination of several dimensions. In particular, we chose to combine quantitative and qualitative methods. However, this does not mean that two methods will be used to understand the same phenomenon, but rather it is argued, firstly, that both of these methods allow us to access to different and complementary information or data, and both participate in the construction of the description of the phenomenon in question. Secondly, in line with Howard S. Becker, among others, we argue that the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods are not necessarily relevant: "The two styles of work do place differing emphasis on the understanding of specific historical or ethnographic cases as opposed to general laws of social interaction. But the two styles also imply one another. Every analysis of a case rests, explicitly or implicitly, on some general laws, and every general law supposes that the investigation of particular case would show that law at work" (Becker,

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<sup>1</sup> For in-depth description of the data collection and the sources, see Annex 1.

forthcoming: 1).<sup>1</sup> Consequently, beyond the traditional opposition between qualitative and quantitative methods, our approach is above all a "fieldwork approach". It aims to offer a multi-faceted comprehension of the mechanisms underlying the publication of Italian novels in France - and the questions they raise regarding cultural globalisation, the functioning of cultural industries and the representations of Italy in France. It is based on the detailed empirical analysis of the indigenous representations of the phenomenon within the field. In fact, our main focus is not on what happened but on how the actors of the field (in a broad sense) refer to it. This constructivist approach leads us to a certain methodological pragmatism: as we aim to distance ourselves from all pre-constructed methodological frameworks in order to be able to adopt a multi-methodological approach based on a strong fieldwork and to take spurs from various methods. We shall follow Kuhn's idea that examining exemplary works in a determined field of research is more useful to the scientist than following abstract procedural rules (Kuhn, 1970). For instance, as far as the interviews with members of the literary world are concerned, guidelines can be found in Heinich's work on literary prizes: *"Dans les entretiens qui vont suivre, menés auprès d'écrivains ayant reçu un prix littéraire, il faudra donc chercher moins l'expérience vécue que le récit de cette expérience. Ce qui s'y trouve explicité, de façon inégalement accentuée, c'est ce que les sujets ont vécu, mais passé au filtre de ce dont ils sont capables de rendre compte publiquement"* (Heinich, 1999: 41).

In the following sections, the various sources which were chosen for this study shall be discussed, including: statistical data, interviews, press files. In this dissertation, they will be used simultaneously in certain chapters and separately in others. However, beforehand, the importance of the historical aspects of the research should be emphasized, as it underlies the entire analysis and it is an essential feature of the definition of our methodological approach.

### 3.2. Periodisation and the importance of History

As we mentioned above, this subject is addressed at two levels, namely international and bi-national. Both of these levels correspond to two historical periods and to two ways of understanding continuity and ruptures. Traditionally, historians used to start from the issue of periodisation to open up new questions and fields of research (especially with regard to modern and contemporary history). The definition of periods was decided at the early stages of historiography and thus prevailed over the ulterior analyses of historical processes that took place during those periods. Conversely, in sociology – as well as in recent historiographical

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<sup>1</sup> available on [www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/hbecker/qa.html](http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/hbecker/qa.html)

developments -, the subject of research defines the methodological choices in this respect. In this way, the moments of temporal rupture need to be (re)defined one at a time. In fact, the subject of our study is a product of choices that we make within the context that conditions these subjects. Most subjects evolve over time; in the case of cultural goods in general, and of books in particular, the evolution pertains either to the way that they are used by the theorists (language, genre, theme) or to the reception by the public. Therefore, their historical insertion is a necessary condition for analysing them, regardless of our perspective.

On the one hand, this thesis must deal with the structural imbalance in the worldwide flows of books: the evolution of these flows during the period that we are looking at needs to be related to the previous configuration. There is no structural rupture, only a statistical one, both empirically and methodologically (see Annex 2) and we use this rupture as a metaphorical starting point, but we need to keep in mind the existence of a certain continuity. On the other hand, if we look at the bi-national level, more concretely at the Italian novels published in French, we can phrase the problem in terms of the history of literature: the manuals are usually divided by century, and then by genre, as if there was no real concern for periodisation. This could be related to an idea, which was rather widespread in the history of literature, that it is not appropriate to study literature from a historical perspective as literature is made up of unique and singular works. We could respond to this by stating that their singularity is only a relative difference in the choice and the organisation of themes, structures, languages and human types that are historically rooted because they last over time. Moreover, from a sociological perspective, these choices are dependent on determined representations and tastes that are characteristic of a certain epoch. In any sphere of art, there is a corresponding aesthetic and intellectual positioning which exists within a determined socio-historical and cultural context that leaves no space for singularities. This means that the analysis of literature, from any perspective, can only be rooted in a historical context. In this study, we are looking at flow of books that need to be linked not only to the worldwide context (international cultural exchanges), but also to the historical constructions of cultural and literary representations of Italy in France. Chapter two focuses specifically on this issue, however the importance of the historical approach underlies the whole dissertation.

In this way, the choice of the period of our research (1982-2001) can now be justified.<sup>1</sup> The empirical justification stands in the section dedicated to the construction of the corpus of books. At a symbolic level, we need to question the validity of choosing 1982 as a turning-point in the publications of Italian novels in France. We already mentioned that there was an increase of the

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<sup>1</sup> The end date 2001 is very justified as it is the last year that data on the publications was available.

publication of Italian novels in France at the beginning of the 1980s, however, this does not explain why 1982 should be a starting point. This date was chosen because it is the year when Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose* was published in French. We argue that it is a turning point as defined by Braudel (1958), as it allows us to understand what is happening, and it can change the course of things. It was not perceived as such at the time, however it constituted a rupture in a period of continuity.<sup>1</sup> As a result, we will consider the publications of Italian novels in France after 1982 as a continuous process, however this needs to be understood in relation to a rupture. We will focus both on the analysis of this rupture and on the continuity that followed it.

### 3.3. Fieldwork and methods

#### *Quantitative data and description*

Many questions arise when looking at the subject of this research: are there more or less books translated and published? Which genre is becoming increasingly successful? Who are the most important authors? Are many translators involved? The first step here is to count the number of books translated during the period and to compare it with the previous decades. This raises the issue of measuring book flows: is it enough to count the number of books published? Is it relevant for our question? In fact, knowing that 100 rather than 300 Italian novels were translated into French in 1985 does not say anything in itself, it needs to be compared to the other years of the period. Even so, it does not help if we do not know among this hundred books the proportion of re-publications, for instance. Another issue at stake concerns the methods used for counting the books: is there a way of doing it properly? In fact, as there are no statistics available regarding translations, the statistics had to be collected from different sources. This process and its limitations are presented above. The result is a bibliography of all of the books translated between 1900 and 2001, basic for the period 1900-1980 and more detailed for 1982-2001. This data is used for exclusively descriptive purposes in order to give an idea of the trends in terms of authors, publishers and translators (such as how many are involved, how does this change over the years).

Of course, parallel to these statistics, we will also use secondary sources such as scientific articles and expert interviews.<sup>2</sup> The aim is to collect the information which is not available through statistical data, relating to the overall diffusion of Italian literature in France in order to find out

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<sup>1</sup> Further explanation will be presented throughout the dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> Which does not necessarily mean that I conducted expert interviews and non expert interviews separately. In quite a few interviews, as I will present below, the two dimensions are present.

whether we can talk about an "Italian trend"? Is this visible in the publishing industry? Were there particular incentives to translations from Italian? What was the state of the book market during this period? The idea is to compare the theorization of potential trends in translations from the perspective of the experts with the results of the data analysis. This approach in itself, because it looks at the interpretation of statistics by the actors themselves, has a hermeneutic ground.

The second type of material is a set of newspaper articles which constitute the press files of some Italian novels published in France.<sup>1</sup> The question of how to understand the changes in the book flows between Italy and France can also be answered by looking at the reception of these books in France. The last part of the dissertation is dedicated to the trajectories of the books of five authors between Italy and France (via other countries as well, but not in a detailed way). Their reception in/by the French media can be analysed through the filter of content analysis: a guideline is predefined including a certain number of themes (such as "translation", "Italian literature" and "titles of novels by the same author"). For each newspaper article, we counted how many times each one of these themes was mentioned. In some cases, the data is textual (as opposed to numeric), for instance the titles of the books. They are then coded in order to be analysed quantitatively. This is a more positivist approach to the research material. However, these results are then completed by the analysis of the way that the interviewees describe how this books came to be translated and published in France.

### *Interviews, discourse analysis and 'analyse de contenu'*

The changes in the books flows can be understood by looking at the indigenous representations of these flows by the actors themselves: how do these changes relate to the choices they have made? Do they situate them – *a posteriori* or not – within a framework structure or a policy as regards the publication of Italian literature in France? The only source is a series of semi-conductive interviews conducted with various agents in the field (publishers, translators, academics, etc.). The aim is to dissect reality as it is experienced by the interviewees in order to understand the steps that led to the publication of those books. How are these stories told? How are the choices presented? The issue of the interviewees' point of view is very present in methodological texts: "that is, we always describe how they interpret the events they participate in, so the only question is not whether we should, but how accurately we do it" (Becker, forthcoming). In particular, "according to interactionism, interviewees are viewed as experiencing subjects who actively construct their social worlds; the primary issue is to generate

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1 for the selection of the books.

data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences; the main ways to achieve this are unstructured, open-ended interviews usually based upon prior, in-depth participant observation" (Silverman, 1998).

In fact, our interviews are semi-constructive, which means that the pre-established guideline is short (only a few questions) and quite flexible. As they are not biographical and deal with several themes, several questions were prepared anyway (rather than ask only one opening question and then let the interviewee speak freely). All of the questions were phrased in order to encourage open answers. The question of the openness of the interviews raises the issue of the relevance of the data. If the interviewer chooses not to ask many questions at all, then he or she will have to select among the parts of discourses that are of interest to them for the purpose of their research. In this case, there was a very clear time constraint,<sup>1</sup> as it usually was anticipated that the interviews would last for maximum one hour. It was thus pointless to "waste" time by letting the interviewee talk about themes that would not be relevant to my research. Moreover, as these interviews only related to one aspect of their work, it would have been odd to pose a general question such as "tell me about your job as a publisher". Similarly, asking "tell me about your publications of Italian novels in the last two decades" would have been inappropriate as many of them only had published two or three Italian novels – which means that it represented about one per cent of the books that they had worked on. The solution was then to divide the scheme into four parts corresponding to the four main themes we would be dealing with. Within each theme, it was important to orientate their discourse and to make sure they would not digress too much from our research question.

We shall not go into detail on the conduct of the interviews at present, as the questions of empathy, distance and meaning of the social interaction will be discussed in the chapters dedicated to the analysis. However, it should be noted that we share the interactionist view that interviews cannot be understood outside their social context. As Silverman has stated, "for interactionists, the social context of the interview is intrinsic to understanding any data that are oriented. While positivists aim for a clear-cut between research interviews and other forms of social interaction, interactionists argue that that aim is unobtainable" (Silverman, 1998). In this thesis, the analysis of the interviews is open to both indigenous categories (a kind of local knowledge) and scientific categories (global knowledge). Rather than trying to show the relationships between different themes, we shall look at the way stories are constructed and presented. This requires the use of some techniques of narrative analysis (the analysis of formal properties of the stories and their social roles). Concretely, each text or piece of text will be

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<sup>1</sup> See the section on the interviews in Annex 1.

treated as a separate unit in order to highlight the way in which the actors define their actions (representations). "In qualitative research, small numbers of texts and documents may be analysed for a very different purpose. The aim is to understand the participant's categories and to see how these are used in concrete activities" (Silverman, 1998). The objective is to emphasize how indigenous categories are constructed and how we can use them in the analysis to make certain generalisations. The difference with causal analysis is that these categories are brought into light not by seeking causal explanations but instead by showing that they are the result of a story. We shall then conceptually describe the processes through which the events have taken place. *"Considérez que ce que vous étudiez n'est pas le résultat de causes, mais le résultat d'une histoire, d'un récit (...). Cette approche nous fait comprendre l'apparition d'un phénomène en nous montrant les étapes du processus qui l'ont engendré, plutôt qu'en nous montrant les conditions qui en ont rendu l'apparition nécessaire. (...) De ce point de vue, les événements ne sont causés par rien d'autre que l'histoire qui les a conduits à être ce qu'ils sont"* (Becker, 2002). This allows us to use the stories told by the interviewees as representations of their actions in order to elaborate on a more general process, namely the circulation of texts between countries. *"On ne s'intéresse pas aux spécificités qui distingueraient notre histoire de toutes les autres. On cherche au contraire à élaborer des histoires typiques, des histoires qui fonctionnent à peu près de la même manière à chaque fois qu'elles se produisent. On ne cherche pas les effets invariants des causes, mais des histoires où toutes les étapes répondent à une logique le but est de décrire en termes conceptuels les processus au cours desquels les événements se produisent"* (Becker, 2002).

Following this, the interviews will be transcribed and analysed through the filter of discourse analysis. It is important to note that in the French social sciences context, 'content analysis' (*analyse de contenu*) resembles the 'discourse analysis' of the Anglo-Saxon social scientists more than to what they refer to as 'content analysis', even though there are some differences. An '*analyse de contenu*' will be carried out, namely a thematic analysis (based on the thematic coherence common to all interviews) aiming to the reconstruct of the logics of actions from the representations. This is very different from the 'content analysis' which is a quantitative technique used on large sets of texts and involving various standardized measurements. The system of coding used will involve a mix between researcher-driven coding (identification of key themes) and action/performance coding (a more inductive way of coding by looking at the changes of the levels of discourse in the text).

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The publications of Italian novels into French between 1982 and 2001 is thus an object at the border of several fields of investigation: cultural globalisation, functioning of the publishing world, changes in the book industry, translation, historical representations. Our research aims to describe and understand the mechanisms, representations and expectations that led to these publications in a context of intensification and acceleration of international cultural exchanges, that has consequences on the national book markets. More precisely, we want to show how that an important outcome of this exploration is that the economic logic interferes more and more in the choices that lead to the publications. A multi-method approach is necessary to the extent that every single method sheds light on a specific aspect of our question. Especially, the combination of qualitative methods (interviews, press files) and quantitative ones (analysis of the corpus and of translation statistics) makes it possible to relate the bi-national level to the international one, on the one hand, and the evolution of the structure of the publishing field to the processes of editorial decision-making, on the other.

In Chapter one, we will look at several theories focusing mainly on polysystem theories, the world-system approaches and the idea of an international literary space, as these offer different analyses of translations as an object of study. Placed into the contemporary context of transformation of the publishing-world, the ensemble of these approaches constitutes the theoretical frame of our research. As a premise to this analysis, we will look at the historical construction of the representations of Italy in France and the outcome of this process in terms of its contemporary image (Chapter two). Subsequently, we will focus more precisely on the representations of Italian literature by the actors of the French publishing world and the specialists of Italian literature. In particular, we will analyse the Paris Book Fair of 2002, at which Italy was the guest of honour, as an illustration of how Italian literature is viewed on the French scene (Chapter three). Following this, we will analyse the corpus of the 1550 novels translated into French between 1982 and 2001 by translators and publishers, in order to build up a picture of the field of publishing of Italian literature in France. From the corpus, we will also draw a panorama of the Italian authors which were translated into French most often (Chapter four). The next step will be to look at how and why these books were published. To this end, we will decipher all of the steps that lead in the publication and what their evocations by the actors themselves imply in terms of reference to the publishing world more generally (Chapter 5). We will then focus on the images of Italian literature within this field, especially in order to understand how the expectations of the public are taken into account in the decision-making process (Chapter six). Finally, we will describe the trajectories of the books of five Italian authors

that were published in France, as an illustration of the mechanisms elucidated throughout this dissertation (Chapter seven).

## Chapter 1: Towards a sociological approach of translations

In this thesis, we aim to analyse a particular type of literary flow in the context of the internationalisation of cultural exchanges and the increasing importance of economic constraints in the publishing world. However, to what extent can we describe it as an expression of a more general trend? Can the mechanisms or processes highlighted in this study apply to other bi-cultural exchanges? In other words, we are trying to build a framework through which to link the bi-dimensional study to a broader level of analysis. We will show that the translation process from Italian into French is being transformed. To what extent is this transformation a sign of a more general change in international flows of translations and in international cultural relationships? Apart from the idea of generalisation, the theoretical framework also needs to be defined in relation to the empirical part of the work. Thus, we need take into consideration the structural conditions of analysis of the case study. The set of actions and interactions that we are looking at makes sense in a context that has many dimensions: structural (at the level of translation flows and the respective positions of languages worldwide), cultural (if we look at the structures of meaning), literary (the translation of books) or economic (pertaining to the recent transformations of the publishing world). In order to highlight the relationship between the theoretical and the empirical levels, throughout this chapter these theories will be supported by statistics regarding the worldwide flows of translations today.

In the first part of this theoretical reflection we shall attempt to link the various dimensions raised above. In particular, we aim to find a way to analyse translation as a cultural activity, due to the fact that books cannot be understood outside a certain cultural context. The issue not only relates to the reception of texts, it also involves their introduction into a national system. We will refer to the polysystemic theories, that look at translations within the framework of the target cultures. This perspective incarnates recent changes in the theories of translations. Although they used to be analysed in relation to the source culture, the contemporary focus is on the fact that they connect different cultural contexts together, and thus impact up the target culture. From there, we will envisage the world-systems (of languages firstly, and then of translations) as a way of analysing the relations between the various target cultures, and thus to link the cultural (bi-national) and the structural (international) levels. These theories introduce the idea of a domination or a hierarchy between cultural systems which can be interpreted in two ways. At the

theoretical level, we will show how the idea of a hierarchical international literary space emerges, which includes several dimensions, such as the literary institutions, the notion of cultural transfer and the idea of literary value. This theoretical development contributes to the sociological understanding of translations in the context of the framework of relationships (between very different actors) within which they are produced and they circulate. At the empirical level, this idea of domination is connected to the actual changes in the book industry, which will be presented in the concluding section of the chapter.

## **1. POLYSYSTEM THEORY**

If we look at literary translations from a sociological perspective, we assume that there is a link between the literary, cultural, social and even economic dimensions of translations. The question is thus to find a framework to analyse how literature correlates with language, society, literature, politics and so on. There are two concepts which could be useful to conceptualise this issue, namely networks and systems. In fact, the correlation of several relations can be envisaged from both perspectives: network-oriented approaches focus on the position of actors within a network and on the description of the organisation of the relations (Ferrand, 1997). As far as our research is concerned, these theories would thus focus on the respective importance of the various actors involved in the translations. Conversely, system-oriented approaches look at the way that systems correlate with a greater whole, which is composed by a multitude of systems. From our perspective, this means that the correlations between literature and other cultural systems, such as language, society or ideology, can only be seen as functional within a cultural whole. The latter approach seems more appropriate here, to the extent that we want to situate the translations in question within a broader framework of analysis, through the international context, rather than focus on the identification of the classes of actors, for instance. This is why we will first look into polysystem theories, which were originally designed as a theoretical framework for the descriptive study of literature and language in their cultural context.

### **1.1. The literary system**

Polysystem theory was first suggested by Itamar Even-Zohar at the beginning of the 1970s: although it emerged from the need to solve some problems directly related to literary theories, its foundations come from the Russian Formalists of the 1920s. Their work, albeit designed to deal

with literary problems, was not confined to the field of literature (that was nonetheless central). The literary polysystem is not only defined as a component of the cultural polysystem, but also as an independent system. Firstly, we shall mention a point raised by Even-Zohar: the way in which the term "system" is used in Polysystem theory is already a commitment to the concept of "system", i.e., "the network of relations that can be hypothesized for a certain set of assumed observables (occurrences/phenomena)" (Even-Zohar, 1990: 27). Consequently, the author proposes to formulate the definition of the 'literary system':

"The network of relations that is hypothesized to obtain between a number of activities called 'literary', and consequently these activities themselves observed via that network;

or

The complex of activities, or any section thereof, for which systemic relations can be hypothesized to support the option of considering them "literary" (Even-Zohar, 1990: 28).

In this context, literature represents not only texts, but also the network of activities leading to the creation of these texts. This is precisely what we shall take into consideration in the analysis of Italian literature translated into French. It is also the idea expressed by Bourdieu (1991) when he defines literature as an aggregate of activities (*champ*<sup>1</sup>), which behaves as a whole in terms of relations, although each separate activity may at the same time be part of some other wholes. In this case, they are even governed by different rules or correlated with different factors (for instance, writers, literary journals and literary critiques are all included as literary factors). In fact, following Bourdieu, we shall define the publishing world as a field, which means that the interactions taking place in every publishing microcosm are determined by the structure of the publishing field (Bourdieu, 1999: 3). Consequently, this structure also determines the relative weight in the relationships between the different agents and the different criteria of evaluation that influence, for instance, the predominance of the literary or the economic logic.

## 1.2. The position of translated literature

Usually, research on literary systems does not take into account the possible existence of translated literature as a particular literary system. Similarly, even though the cultural historians recognize the importance of translation for the crystallization of national cultures, so far there has been very little work carried out on this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> In the bourdieusian theory, a *field* is a structured space of positions and relations between actors, characterized by an uneven distribution of resources (that generates an opposition between dominants and dominated). The social space is constituted by a series of autonomous fields, each one producing a specific mode of domination (literary field, political field, journalistic field and so on).

We have seen that one of the hypotheses of the Polysystem theorists concerns the existence of a network of relations within the components of any literary system (usually, national literature). The question is whether the same sort of network of relations can be found within a group of translated texts. How can we account for the fact that they are apparently put together arbitrarily as a group of texts imported from other literatures and detached from their original contexts? Even-Zohar (1997: 46) argues that translated works correlate in at least two ways: "(a) in the way their source texts are selected by the target literature, the principles of selection never being uncorrelatable with the home co-systems of the target literature (to put in the most cautious way); and (b) in the way they adopt specific norms, behaviours, and policies – in short, in their use of the literary repertoire – which results from their relations with the other home co-systems".

As far as translated literature is concerned, the texts are chosen according to their compatibility with the new approaches and the supposedly innovatory role that they assume within the target literature (Even-Zohar, 1997: 47). What then are the conditions which give rise to a situation of this kind? Three of the main conditions will now be discussed.

1. *When a polysystem has not yet been crystallized ("young" literature).* A good example of this phenomenon can be found in Shavit's analysis of the role of translations in the constitution of Hebrew literature (Shavit, 2002). She explains that in Israel *"la littérature étrangère a joui d'un statut privilégié dans la production de la culture hébraïque qui elle-même joua un rôle essentiel dans la construction de la nation, étant l'un des biens symboliques les plus précieux et les plus rares dont disposait la communauté juive en Palestine pour exprimer ses aspirations nationales et ses revendications d'autonomie"* (Zohar, 2002: 21). There was a fear of the competition from foreign literature. *"Toutefois, l'aspiration au développement d'une littérature nationale joua en faveur de la centralité de la littérature traduite en hébreu et l'a généralement emporté sur l'opposition exprimée par les partisans d'une littérature d'origine hégémonique. Plus que la littérature hébraïque elle-même, c'est la littérature en hébreu qui comptait"* (2002: 29).

2. *When a literature is either peripheral or weak, or both, it may lack a repertoire which translated literature can provide for.* For instance, this is the case of popular national literature in Italy. French literature provides a repertoire that does not exist in Italy. Agostini-Ouafi quotes Gramsci's position on this matter (Agostini-Ouafi, 1996: 76): *"Così il popolo italiano si è appassionato, attraverso il romanzo storico-popolare francese (...), alle tradizioni francesi, monarchiche e rivoluzionarie e conosce la figura popolare di Enrico IV più che quella di Garibaldi, la Rivoluzione del 1789 più che il Risorgimento (...), si appassiona per un passato non suo, si serve nel suo linguaggio e nel suo pensiero di metafore e di riferimenti culturali francesi"*

*ecc., è culturalmente più francese che italiano*"<sup>1</sup> (Gramsci, *Letteratura e vita nazionale*, Rome, Ed Riuniti, reviewed edition of 1977: 17-18). Another example of this situation could be the existence of literary trends, such as romanticism, for instance, which relies upon its exportation into weaker or peripheral systems.<sup>2</sup>

3. *When there are turning points, crises or literary vacuums in a literature.* In these situations, it is easier for foreign models to infiltrate.

In the Western hemisphere, peripheral literature usually concerns smaller nations. This is explained by the fact that the hierarchical relations have been established in Europe since the very beginning of these literatures. The ones that took peripheral positions were often modelled upon external literature, at least to a certain extent. Nevertheless, the existence of a close relationship between literary contacts and the status of translated literature is crucial as, if there is interference, it is the portion of translated literature deriving from a major source literature that is likely to assume a central position.

This development contains the implicit assumption that translations should be studied in relation to the target system. This raises a very important issue, namely the relationship between the translated literature and the target culture, as opposed to the source culture.

### 1.3. Translations as facts of target culture

The idea of 'target-oriented approach' to translations was developed from the 1970s onwards by some proponents of translation studies and polysystem theories. "In an attempt to pursue this goal, translations have been regarded as facts of the culture which hosts them, with the concomitant assumption that whatever their function and identity, these are constituted within that same culture and reflects its own constellation. To be sure, it was by virtue of such a methodological starting point that this approach to the study of translations and translating in their immediate contexts earned the nickname of 'target-oriented'" (Toury, 1995: 24).

Until the 1970s, translation studies were extremely source-oriented, that is to say, they gave priority to the relationship between the translation and the source text, especially the respect (or not) of its features. Target constraints were seldom taken into account, and only from a linguistic

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<sup>1</sup> "Through French historical-popular novels, Italian people thus became fond of French monarchical and revolutionary traditions, and they knew the popular figure of Henri IV better than Garibaldi, the 1798 revolution better than the *Risorgimento*. The people conceives a passion for a past which is not theirs. They use French metaphors and cultural references in their own language and thoughts. Culturally, they are more French than Italian".

<sup>2</sup> However, there are situations where the distinction between these first two cases is not obvious, as they can overlap. For instance, Shavit's analysis could also illustrate the case of weak or peripheral literature."

perspective. When the target-oriented framework was presented, it appeared as quite revolutionary in the field, but it then led to a change in the paradigm in translation studies. The question is thus to understand the implications of such a change. "Adopting culture-internal distinctions as a starting point for the *study* of translation as it is conceived of, and executed, within the conditioning framework of a culture thus has the big advantage of not imposing on its object any distinctions which may prove alien to that culture" (Toury, 1995: 26). Indeed, it is important to point out that when a text is presented in the target-country as a translation, it is usually accepted as such, without any further questions being asked. Whereas in the opposite situation – when a text is presented as having been written in a language – it may be suspected of being a translation, because the "persons-in-the-culture" (Toury, 1995: 26) associate certain features of textual make-up and verbal formulation with translation and translating. The point is that a translation and its original cannot, in any way, share the same systemic space, because translation as such plays a role in the target-country. Toury (1995: 27) goes even further by saying that "translation activities and their products not only can, but do cause changes in the *target* culture". This is connected to the assumption of the polysystem theorists that translations can constitute a system of their own within a culture. Relating this to the target-oriented assumption, Toury proposes the following reformulation: "Translations are facts of target cultures; on occasion facts of a special status, sometimes even constituting identifiable (sub)systems of their own, but of the target culture in any event" (Toury, 1995: 29).

Therefore, polysystem theorists, have gone beyond the normative approach and argued that translations have to be analysed within the system in which they function by basing their hypotheses on certain assumptions formulated by the Russian formalists of the 1920s. For instance, literary translations need to be understood in relation to the entire literary system of the target-culture. For our research, this means that Italian literature translated into French has to be understood within the French literary system and in relation to its own set of norms and rules. This analysis relies on the shift of orientation from source to target culture orientation that has occurred in the last twenty-five years in the field of translation studies. Following Johan Heilbron (1999), it is argued that this conceptual shift is a useful but insufficient point of departure for the sociological approach to translations at the international level. In fact, because they deal not only with literary systems but also with languages and non-literary translations, the world-system approaches offer a more global comprehension of the idea of cultural domination.



## 2. WORLD-SYSTEM APPROACHES

### 2.1. The world language system

The notion of world-systems is a key concept in political macro-sociology, initiated by Immanuel Wallerstein in 1974. De Swaan's use of the notion applies to languages. His book *Words of the World* (De Swaan, 2001) is a study of language communication, through the description of what he calls a world-language system. He describes a long-term and global process of integration, that led to the emergence of a language constellation held together by a hyper central language. This process is one aspect of what is usually referred to as globalisation.

Throughout the centuries, events such as the formation of empires (Latin, Chinese, Arabic), the travels to Africa, Asia and America, and more recently the processes of colonisation and decolonisation, have allowed diversity and built up the atlas of the world as a language system. Today, this system has a four-level dynamics. Firstly, 98% of languages, mainly used for conversation and narration, belong to the peripheral level. This is followed by the central level, which includes the national languages, used for official purposes, which are the means of communication between peripheral groups. Thirdly, there are twelve super central languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swahili), which are used for long-distance international communication. Finally, and this is a rather recent phenomenon, English is the one and only hyper-central language.

De Swaan's description of the political economy of language is based on two assumptions. The first of these claims that language is learned 'upwards' (from the smaller to the bigger language, the poorer to the richer, and so on). The second shows that preferences for learning a language are shaped by perceptions and expectations of other people's language acquisition through social interaction. Moreover, certain properties of language intended in an economic sense can be stressed: language is not used up in using it; the more people use it, the more it is valuable; it can be used freely without cost; and a prior investment is needed to use it. These characteristics fit with the economic definition of language as a 'hyper collective good' which include: it is impossible to exclude anyone from enjoying such good; the collaboration of many is necessary to maintain it; the efforts of one person are not sufficient to bring it into existence; and its utility does not decrease when new users are added. There is, thus, a collective awareness of the collective aspect of language property. This implies that the more a language is expected to gain – or lose – speakers, the more it is likely to gain or lose even more, since there are external network effects.

Based on these hypotheses, De Swaan has created a model that could measure the expectations of the individuals when they choose to learn a language. In other words, to render the dynamics of the specific historical language constellation: why do people decide to learn a language, how do these decisions influence other individuals and what are the overall consequences of individual choices? He is interested in the aggregate results of individual choices. He defines the communication value or Q-value of a language, as the product of its prevalence and its centrality. The prevalence is judged by the proportion of speakers of a certain language in the global constellation and the centrality is measured by the proportion of multilingual speakers competent in this language. He then enlarges the unit of analysis, switching from a single language to the notion of 'language repertoire', namely, all of the possible constellations of languages which include a certain language. The Q-value is an indicator of the communication value of a language, conveying a reconstruction of the value that speakers attribute to it: their choices are determined by an intuitive evaluation of the Q-value of the language that they plan to learn.

We can wonder whether the definition of speakers as rational actors is always relevant. De Swaan argues that the choice of learning a language is determined by the evaluation of an overall situation (how many speakers, how many multilingual speakers and communication value of the language). The main point is that languages with a high number of speakers are more attractive than those with a low number of speakers, *a fortiori* if these speakers are multilingual. The first problem is that data on languages is scarce and, by definition, it is difficult to rely on – as there are different degrees of knowledge of a language. The author himself defines the Q-value as an 'approximate quantity' (p.39) and a 'rough-and-ready indicator' (p.178). However, he argues that whenever reliable data is available (this is the case for India and the European Union), "the results inspire confidence, since they match the impressions of expert observers. In all other cases the Q-value must be guessed from disparate sources, but even then, it yields persuasive rankings for the relative strengths of the various languages in the constellation" (p.178). One could argue that this generalisation might not have a strong foundation. In any case, a second problem arises, that of individual perspective. How do we account for individual choices in this framework of analysis?

For bilingual elites, particularly in post-colonial countries where situations of diglossia prevail, there are two options for the choice of languages. On the one hand, the 'cosmopolitan strategy' (p.41) consists of adopting the most widespread language, usually the second one, and thus competing in a larger market. The objection to this option is that it leads to a desertion of cultural heritage. The 'local strategy' (p.41), on the other hand, is to stick to the less widespread language, thus fighting against the threat of extinction. In this case, the dilemma is seen from the

perspective of the world language system. The author switches to a different level of analysis, that of the 'collective cultural capital' (42), namely the totality of texts available in a language. The question is thus the choice between the free exchange of texts and the linguistic protection of the community. The circulation of texts does not have any transport cost, however, translation costs work as a protectionist barrier. The authors whose language has a low Q-value can thus either learn to write in a foreign language or find a foreign publisher who is willing to pay for translation. Here, De Swaan's work is complementary of other analysis of text circulation processes that highlight the existence of a world-system of translation (e.g. Heilbron, 1999), parallel to the 'emerging cultural world-system' (De Swaan, 1993), also based on a core/periphery structure with different levels of centrality. The circulation of texts is not only based on the dilemma between free exchange and protectionism, it is also shaped by permanent factors such as the fact that the flows go from the centre to the periphery, or that there is an unequal balance between imports and exports (Heilbron, 1999).

Taken as a whole, De Swaan's analysis belongs to the rational choice theories' approaches. The individuals choose the language that they want to learn or speak according to some parameters that they clearly identify, and for which they have all of the necessary information. This presentation would not be complete without a reference to Laitin's work on the language communities and the language fights. He refers to the debate on the impact of ethnical heterogeneity on political outcomes and describes the concept of a language community (Laitin, 2000). In an earlier article, he studied "the attempts by governments and/or linguistic groups to affect, officially or unofficially, changes in the languages used in a society" (Laitin, 1988). Language standardization is presented as a key component of state building, to the extent that twentieth century state builders have sought to promote language uniformization within the state boundaries. This was a way of facing the problem of regional elites, which constituted a threat to national unity. The main theoretical idea underlying Laitin's analysis of language fights is to view languages as a core component of our understanding of a nation, in line with Anderson who describes nations as "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983). Thus, the necessity of a shared language directly derives from the necessity to communicate. In this article, the author makes a typology of language conflicts, containing six steps, which can follow each other in time within the same nation and that shall now be described in more detail.

- *State rationalization* appears when a common medium is necessary. "Rationalization of the state does not require that people in the periphery speak the language of the court or bureaucracy (this requirement is part of nation building). But the ruler intent on reduction costs through language

standardization must seek certain allies within any region of the state who will pay their own costs to learn the language of the centre" (Laitin, 1988: 291). Here, game theory shows that for the state, no matter what the elites' strategy is. "At best, they can avoid their worst pay-off by learning the language of the center and thereby become bilingual" (p. 292). Laitin concludes by asserting the advantage of the center for the regional elites as regards the learning of languages.

- *Nation building* can follow state rationalization, to the extent that both the centre and the elites will develop new preferences (preferences change over time). Some members of the regional elites have become state bureaucrats and more people become competent in the central language (even though the masses continue not to speak it). This leads to a situation of diglossia, rather than a real fight.

- *Regional reactivation*, when the state begins to seek popular support for its authority, and thus language homogeneity. Strategy of the masses and regional elites: continue to learn the language of the center, regardless of what the state does.

- *Regional "tipping"* happens when the center has established partial hegemony. "Regional reactivation can succeed unless, through political action, the region can create a change in what would be the individual preferences of ordinary citizens" (296). However, regional elites will continue to have an incentive to learn the state language.

- *Postcolonialism*. If the model of state rationalization is correct, then why was it so difficult to apply it to indigenous languages in India and Africa? The hypothesis presented here is that this has more to do with the conflicts of interests between nationalist and bureaucratic elites (both at the centre) than with the nature of the society (such as its multilingualism and its arbitrary boundaries).

- *Competitive assimilation* is an application of the prisoners dilemma to the migrants vis-à-vis other migrants: do they have too much loyalty towards their home language? Will their children be assimilated into the language of the dominant indigenous culture?

Laitin and De Swaan converge in showing that political linguistics can be connected to broader questions in political science, such as state building, or community conflicts, and they both use hypotheses coming from game theory. It is interesting to show how a variety of paradigms can be applied to the study of the world language configuration. For the kind of data we will use in our analysis, we will see that it will be easier to apply the Heilbron's hypothesis as regards the world-system of translation, or some features from a bourdieusian approach of the international field. However, we will also show in the next section how De Swaan's analysis could be used for the purposes of this thesis.

## 2.2. The Italian language in France

It would be interesting to define the respective positions of French and Italian in the world language system. We cannot calculate their Q-value, as the data on the number of multilingual speakers is not easily available (and not even data on the number of people who speak Italian in France and vice versa). By definition, it is very complex to evaluate the number of people of a given category who "speak" a certain language. For example, how do we categorise someone as "bilingual"? The number of questions is infinite. Indeed, the issue of quantifying the number of Italian speakers could be the object of a research project in itself. However, for our purpose, it is only necessary to try to understand the position of Italian in France. It is important, thus, to find out to what extent is it learnt at school or by other means, and whether it is part of the most spoken languages?

Unfortunately, there is not much data available in this regard. The only relevant figures come from the French Ministry of Education website,<sup>1</sup> and these relate to the number of pupils of the French "second level" studying various languages. In the French system, the "second level" is attended by pupils from fifteen to eighteen years old. During the "first level", which is from eleven to fourteen years old, it is compulsory to choose their first language at the age of eleven, and a second one at thirteen (this is for general sections, as opposed to technical). There is then the possibility of choosing a third language from the age of fifteen, and also of giving up the second one (and thus only learning one language), and even give up all languages (for some students of technical sections only). Overall, there are 5.8 million pupils in the second level in France, 90% of them are learning at least a language. 86.5% of them are attending English classes, 32.3% are learning Spanish, 16.6% German, and only 3.7% Italian. The other languages, such as Russian, Portuguese, Arabic are taught less often. The total of these percentages is more than 100 because around half of the pupils study at least two languages. English is chosen as the first language in 90% of the cases (8.9% choose German, 0.8% Spanish, and only 0.1% Italian). As far as the second language is concerned, most pupils study Spanish (64.5%), then German (17.4%), English (11.2%) and Italian (6%). Overall, Italian is the least studied of these four languages. In fact, it is not taught in every school (contrary to English, German and Spanish), however the proportion of schools offering Italian classes has increased since the 1980s.

However, we can also observe that English is by far the most widely taught language in France, and Italian is the fourth after Spanish and German. The other languages taught in French secondary schools are attended by less than 0.1% of the pupils. We can thus say that Italian

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<sup>1</sup> [www.education.gouv.fr](http://www.education.gouv.fr)

belongs to the second "circle" of the constellation of languages taught in France (with English in the first circle, Spanish, German and Italian in the second and the other languages in the third). This means that Italian is one of the foreign languages of reference in France, and it is allegedly spoken by a significant number of people.<sup>1</sup>

The results of this analysis are problematic as it is not possible to assert that someone who learnt Italian for two years in secondary school is an "Italian speaker". This depends on how much time (and energy) was spent in classes, the quality of the teaching, the number of opportunities for practicing the language, and so on. Moreover, school is not the only place for learning languages. For instance, in Paris, there are at least twenty schools specialised in English courses, five for Italian, five for Spanish, and only three for German.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, there are more Italian cultural institutes than German ones, even though German is taught more at school. This means that more people decide to learn Italian at some point of their life. In fact, the two main institutes (the *Centro di lingua e cultura italiana* and the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura*) agreed that the number of inscriptions to the courses has constantly increased since the beginning of the 1990s, and they have hired new teachers. This proves that it is very difficult to estimate the number of people who speak a foreign language. However, these examples are useful to show general trends in language teaching in France.

De Swaan's analysis looks at the number of multilingual speakers who speak a certain language, and uses this as an indicator of the degree of centrality of this language. Yet, this is not the only important element to look at in order to understand this degree of centrality. In fact, the analysis of the world-system of translation will show that the size of the group of speakers is an important factor, but it is not decisive in determining the degree of centrality of a language (Heilbron, 1996).

### 2.3. The world-system of translation

#### *Hypotheses*

In order to complete the Polysystem theory hypothesis that translations need to be analysed in relation to the framework of the target-culture rather than the source culture, Heilbron proposes to consider target-cultures as part of an international system, "a global constellation of language groups and of national or supranational cultures" (Heilbron, 1999: 440). He argues that a

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<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to look at the geographical distribution of the pupils learning Italian. It is assumed that the rate would be higher in the regions which are close to Italy.

<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that there are only 20 schools providing English courses, it means that there are 20 schools providing only English courses. There are plenty of schools providing courses in various languages (generally English, German, Italian and Spanish).

structural analysis of the international flows of translated books would allow us to understand the actual translation process. Two questions underlie this statement. Firstly, how can we account for the uneven flows of translated books between different language groups? Secondly, how can we explain the variety of roles of translations within these groups? The author suggests that the various activities involved can be considered as interdependent and thus can be analysed as constituting a world system. It should be also noted that this emerging system does not follow the dominant view in world system theories, to the extent that it is not only a reflection of the structural contradictions of the world economy.<sup>1</sup> Transnational cultural exchanges can thus be considered as a relatively autonomous field (in line with Bourdieu's definition), that is to say, a whole having its own economic, political and symbolic dimensions. This is a very important assertion that will be used as conceptual tool for the analysis of our case study. We thus need to go into more detail in Heilbron's description of this international system. The following sections describe the world-system of translations and present its genesis in the European context and its current characteristics.

### *The genesis of the European system of translation*

The phenomenon of transnational cultural exchanges and translations is well-established, and the evolution of the practice of translation has not followed a linear process of internationalisation in any respect. In medieval Europe, there was already an elaborate system of cultural exchanges based on the Church. The clergy had an extended network of communication all over Europe. We can define it as "translocal", as there were no nations in the contemporary meaning of the term, and as a consequence, no international or transnational communication. Latin used to be the means of communication and the first College of Translators was created in Toledo in 1135, based on a religious code and Latin as a common language. Many translations were published from Arabic and Ancient Greek.

From the Renaissance onwards, an increasing number of books were translated into vernacular languages, focusing initially on military and scientific matters. The word "translation" (*traduzione* in Italian) appeared in the sixteenth century. Translations developed as a result of the invention of printing and soon got to a larger public than that previously reached by the Church. Then, with the rise of nation-states, cultural exchanges were completely transformed: Latin lost its status and vernacular languages occupied an increasingly important position. In many countries, universities became national institutions and a national and secular cultural system was institutionalised.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the position usually defended by the exponents of these theories. See in particular Wallerstein, 1991.

From the sixteenth century onwards, French became the central language as France occupied a dominant position inside Europe. Louis XIV's reign led to the consolidation and enlargement of the national system of Academies which aimed to enhance the development of the French language and literature. French translations then tried to adapt foreign works to national conventions.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, they acted as indispensable intermediaries for many translators of other European countries, often being re-translated into other languages. As time went by, English and German became more important, but this did not occur until the eighteenth century. French translations were increasingly criticized for being unfaithful to the original texts and progressively lost their central place. Cultural rivalry between France, on the one hand, and England and Germany, on the other, increased and in general transnational communication became less direct, and increasingly dependent on intermediaries such as translators, publishers, and critics.

During the nineteenth century, the formation of national cultural systems was one of the factors that favoured the appearance of political nationalism. After a long period during which national networks developed, transnational ties also started to become important. Since the 1850s, the number of international cultural organisations has continued to increase, such as the Nobel Prize, travelling exhibitions, the Olympic Games and international conferences (Heilbron 2001). During the first half of the twentieth century, the new strength of the German Empire led to an increasing rivalry between states and a clear rise of nationalism, with obvious consequences for cultural exchanges. After the Second World War, the improvements in transports and the development of new means of communication led to a revival of transnational relations. At the cultural level, relation increasingly took place in international networks. A process of internationalisation started, also with the emergence of the idea of national cultural heritage. With the hegemony of the United States, English quickly became the main language of international communication. It is probable that this situation will last for some time.

### *Characteristics of the world-system of translation today*

As we have shown above, a shift took place within the world-system in the twentieth century, namely the start of a process of internationalisation. Therefore, it is necessary to describe some of the main features of the contemporary system, for example how it is structured and how it works. We shall use UNESCO's data on translations (*Index translationum*<sup>2</sup>) of the past two decades in order to illustrate the characteristics highlighted by Heilbron (1996, 1999), as he does not go into detail in his presentation of the system, and to show the latest evolutions of the world-system of

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<sup>1</sup> This is the origin of the famous words of the philosopher M n ge, who referred to French translations as « belles infid les ».

<sup>2</sup> <http://databases.unesco.org/xtrans/xtra-form.html>



translation. "As the basic units of the world-system of translation are language groups, the object of analysis is the structure of the translation flows between these language groups. (...) The flow of book translations between these language groups can be analysed by using book statistics, which regularly include figures for translations" (Heilbron, 1999: 432). The author uses some international data on translation flows (mostly the *Index translationum*) in order to present some general characteristics of the system. In another article on the topic (Heilbron, 1996), he identifies eight major features of the system.<sup>1</sup>

**1) The world-system of translation is based on a core-periphery structure.** There are four levels of centrality for languages. Firstly, the hyper-centre, which is represented by the English language. For instance, in 1978, 40% of the translated books were translated from English. Secondly, German, French and Russian (between 10% and 12%) occupy a central position.<sup>2</sup> We can see that about 75% of the translated books in that year were translated from only four languages. Thirdly, eight languages are considered to belong to a "semi-periphery", namely, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Danish, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Dutch (between 1% and 3%). The fourth level contains the rest of the languages, each of them representing less than 1% of the books translated.

**2) The hierarchical structure also corresponds to the structure of imports.** The publication of translated books is lower in countries whose language occupies a central position. In Great Britain and the United States, less than 5% of the published books are translations, and this proportion has been stable since 1945. This ratio is 10% to 12% for French and German, 12% to 20% for Italian and Spanish. Thus, there is an inverse relationship between the centrality of a language in the world-system of translations and the proportion of translations in the national production of books. In this way, a central position means that the country is used as a reference point elsewhere, however few books are translated into its language.

In fact, by looking at the structure of the book imports, we can highlight the hierarchical core-periphery structure of the system. With UNESCO's *Index translationum*, it is possible to isolate the number of translations from any language for a specific period of time.<sup>3</sup> A selection of a few

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<sup>1</sup> The order of presentation here differs from that used by Heilbron.

<sup>2</sup> The position of Russian may have changed today, since the article was written in 1996.

<sup>3</sup> The hierarchical structure of the system is based on the exports (translations from a language). It makes sense to the extent that we look at the way a language, the nation(s) where it is spoken and its (their) culture is spread throughout the world. It is an analysis in terms of cultural domination. However, this approach may appear as counter-intuitive to some readers, who would rather look at the structure of the imports: what do we bring into our

languages will be used in all the analyses of the following section including French, Italian, English, German, Spanish, Swedish/Danish,<sup>1</sup> Dutch, Russian, Hindi, Japanese. The first five are the five most widely spoken European languages, while the remaining three are more peripheral European languages. Russian is a particular case, to the extent that it was very strong during the Communist period and declined slowly afterwards. Hindi, despite being one of the most spoken languages, has an extremely low dispersal worldwide; finally, Japanese is interesting to the extent that it is peripheral, but in rising steadily since the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

*Table 1.1. Translation of books from various languages: % of the total number of books translated, 1988-1999 (average for three sub-periods).<sup>3</sup>*

	ENGLISH	FRENCH	GERMAN	RUSSIAN	ITALIAN	SPANISH
1988-1991	49.42	10.16	8.78	8.62	2.95	2.4
1992-1996	59.45	10.71	9.17	2.06	2.76	2.53
1996-1999	61.9	8.96	9.62	1.43	3.12	2.62
	SWEDISH	DUTCH	JAPANESE	HINDI	OTHERS	Total
1988-1991	1.92	0.79	0.55	0.08	14.33	100
1992-1996	1.4	0.8	0.53	0.06	10.53	100
1996-1999	1.22	0.81	0.64	0.05	9.63	100

The hyper central position of English is indeed clear from these figures. Moreover, it has become even more central at the end of the 1990s, since 61,9% of the translations between 1996 and 1999 were translations from English, and there were less than 50% between 1988 and 1991. The central languages were French, German and Russian during the first period 1988-1991, with between 8 and 11% of the total translations from one of these three languages. Nevertheless it has changed since then, following the collapse of the Soviet Union: French and German are now the only two languages from which 8-10% of translations are made. It is interesting to note that the imports from France slightly increased between the first and the second period (1992-1995), but then clearly decreased, falling from 10.71 to 8.96% of the total. This means that French is still a central language but it is being translated less than it used to until the mid-1990s. The semi-peripheral group is constituted by Spanish, Italian and Swedish during the first period, with Russian joining them from 1992 onwards. Each of their exports represent between 1 and 3% of the total. It is interesting to note that there are no rates between 3% and 8%. This shows that the

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culture? The switch corresponds to the switch introduced by the translation studies in the 1970s from the source to the target culture.

According to the availability of the data, either Danish or Swedish will be used.

We need to remind that here we are looking at languages (as opposed to nation states), especially at the proportions from/into one language as proportion of overall translations. The purpose is to evaluate the respective weight of the languages in a given situation (determined by the total number of translations). Further on, we will focus specifically on the translations as proportions of book productions for each country.

For a detailed explanation of the choice of the period (e.g. why it starts in 1988) see Annex 2.

structure of the system is very hierarchical. Finally, the translations from the other languages are all under 1% of the total, and this has remained constant over the years.

*Table 1.2. Translations of books into various languages: % of the total number books translated, 1988-1999 (average for three sub-periods).*

	ENGLISH	FRENCH	GERMAN	RUSSIAN	ITALIAN	SPANISH
1988-1991	8.24	11.23	15.73	5.75	2.75	10.34
1992-1996	5.51	11.1	16.33	7.08	2.45	10
1996-1999	5.18	12.78	15.95	2.86	2.24	10.01
	SWEDISH	DUTCH	JAPANESE	HINDI	OTHERS	Total
1988-1991	1.14	7.35	3.93	0.21	33.33	100
1992-1996	0.9	5.6	8	0.1	32.93	100
1996-1999	X	4.85	8.29	0.12	37.72	100

The appearance of the translations imports is very different from that of the exports: the hypercentrality of a language no longer exists. We can identify three groups of languages. The first group consists of those who have translated more 10% of the total books: French, German and Spanish. German is by far the biggest importer, with more than 15%. Secondly, between 5 and 10% of translations are done into English, Russian (only the first two periods), Dutch (albeit the imports are only 4,85% of the total between 1996 and 1999) and Japanese from the second period onwards. The case of Russian is peculiar as the number of translations into Russian varies between 5% and 8% during the whole period, except for the years 1997 (0.31%) and 1998 (0.71%); this is the reason why the average is lower than 5% between 1996 and 1999. The most probable explanation for this sudden decline in book exports is either a problem of statistics or a consequence of political events. The translations into Japanese enter this category from 1991 with 6.39 of the total and will represent around 8% of the total from then onwards. Finally, the third group consists of the languages which represent less than 5% of the total translations: Italian, Swedish and Hindi. From our perspective, it is interesting to note that Italian is not a large importer and there are not many translations into Italian.

**3) The structure of the system is hierarchical but not static, since it represents dynamic processes of unequal exchanges.** We can mention as an example the decline of Russian after 1989. In fact, the real transition occurred between 1990 and 1991. During this time, the imports from Russian constituted around 12% of the total in 1988 and 1989, and then 7.34% in 1990 and 3.92% in 1991. This was followed by a steady decline (1.36% in 1999). This is an interesting case to the extent that the loss of political and economic power is reflected in the decline of the translations from a language. Part of this phenomenon is due to the fact that after 1989,

translations were no longer carried out from Russian into the other languages of the USSR (for instance, 133 books were translated from Russian into Ukrainian in 1988, only eleven in 1998).

4) The flows are mainly from the centre to the periphery. This also implies that the communication between the groups of the periphery often takes place by means of a central language. This is the case, for instance, if the translation of a German text into French is made from its English translation, and not directly from the original text or, in our case, if the French translation of an Italian novel is used for the translation into Spanish.<sup>1</sup>

5) The more central a language is in the world-system of translation, the greater the variety of types of books translated from it. In this case it could be interesting to look at the distribution of the translations from English, Italian and French by genre, in order to conduct further analysis of their respective positions in the world-system of translation.

*Table 1.3: Distribution by genre of the translations from Italian<sup>2</sup>*

	CAT 0	CAT 1	CAT 2	CAT 3	CAT 5	CAT 6	CAT 7	CAT 8	CAT 9
1988-1991	0.8	5.5	11	6.5	2.9	7.3	11.9	45.9	9.2
1992-1995	0.7	5.2	13.8	7.1	2.7	6.5	12.1	43.3	8.7
1996-1999	1.1	6.1	15.5	6.3	2.3	7	13.2	38.9	9.3

*Table 1.4: Distribution by genre of the translations from French*

	CAT 0	CAT 1	CAT 2	CAT 3	CAT 5	CAT 6	CAT 7	CAT 8	CAT 9
1988-1991	0.7	6.4	6.8	8.3	7.4	3	7.4	49.2	10.9
1992-1995	0.9	6.8	6.8	8.7	7.1	3.2	7	49.8	9.8
1996-1999	1.4	7.8	8.3	9.5	8.6	2.9	9.5	41.8	9.8

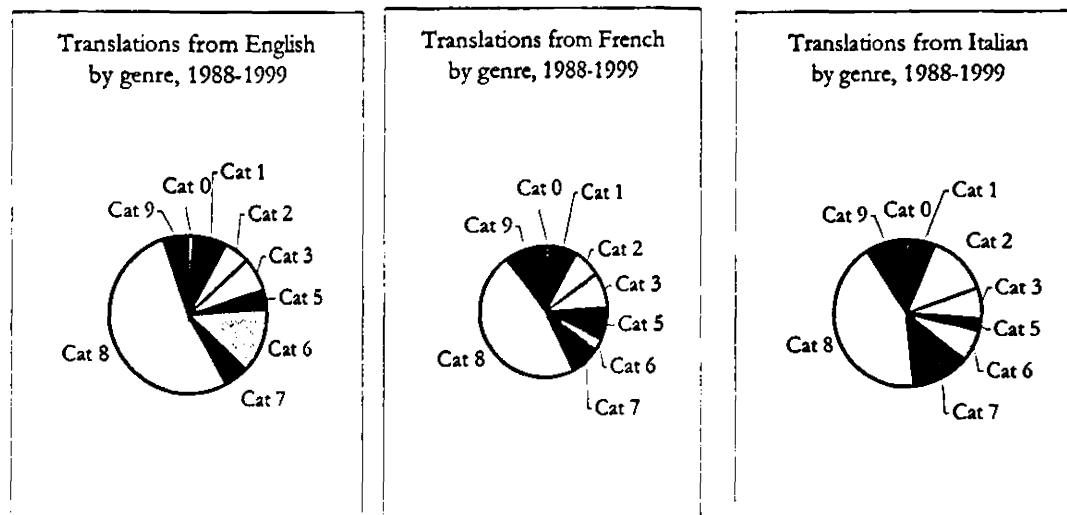
*Table 1.5: Distribution by genre of the translations from English*

	CAT 0	CAT 1	CAT 2	CAT 3	CAT 5	CAT 6	CAT 7	CAT 8	CAT 9
1988-1991	0.6	6.2	5.2	6.9	4.3	12.5	4.2	54.6	5.5
1992-1995	0.8	7.7	5	7.1	4	12.5	4.8	54.5	5
1996-1999	1.6	6.6	5.3	7.3	3.2	15.5	5.8	50	4.9

<sup>1</sup> This practices are part of the "hidden side" of the book industry, and thus cannot be exposed by looking at the statistics. A specific inquiry should be conducted, which will not be done here for obvious time constraints. However, in the last part of the dissertation, we will look at the dates of translation of various Italian novels into different languages, which might give an idea of the mechanisms of transit referred to here.

<sup>2</sup> The categories correspond to the Universal Decimal Classification: Cat 0: Generalities; Cat 1: Philosophy, psychology; Cat 2: Religion, theology; Cat 3: Social sciences, law, education; Cat 5: Pure sciences; Cat 6: Applied sciences; Cat 7: Arts, games, sports; Cat 8: Literature, linguistic; Cat 9: History, geography, biographies.

The most striking observation which can be seen is dominance of literature (Category 8) in comparison with the other genres. It represents between 38 and 45% of the translations from Italian, half of the those from French and over 50% (up to 55%) for those from English. For the rest, the visual representation gives an overall view of the repartition.



We observe that there are no striking differences in the distribution of the translations from the two languages by genre. One striking fact is the relative importance of the second category (Religion, Theology) in the translations from Italian, which can easily be explained by the fact that they include all of the texts published by the Vatican. It is the same for the translations in arts, games and sports (category 7), and the explanation is to be found in the great Italian artistic patrimony, that is largely analysed and commented upon. At the same time, the translation of books belonging to the category of sciences (category 5 and 6) are comparatively more numerous from English. On the one hand, this is not surprising as the predominance of the United States in this field appears to be unavoidable. On the other hand, the proportion of translations from English among all the scientific publications is probably not so relevant because texts are read worldwide in English in this field. Nevertheless, the overall the variety of books translated from English does not appear to be greater than those translated from Italian. Conversely, as we mentioned above, the importance of literature is bigger in the translations from English. In this sense, the distribution is more concentrated for the most central language, which goes against Heilbron's hypothesis. In order to go further in the analysis, we would need to look at the division of every genre by language.<sup>1</sup> Of course, three examples are not enough to draw general conclusions and it would be necessary to look at the translations from some of the small languages, among others. But our point here was to look at the distribution of the translations

<sup>1</sup> See Heilbron, 1996, p. 345 for the Dutch case.

from Italian by genre, as they are the ones that we are dealing with, and compare them to those from French and English, which are our two languages of reference.

6) **Not all types of book have the same chance of being translated.** Consequently, there are several factors in analysing the translations from a specific language, such as position in the world-system of translation and the type of books. There are different kinds of markets: some are highly protected, such as the market of school books, and others are rather open, such as the market for fiction, where the number of translations is high. Sometimes they even represent the majority of books in a particular culture. In fact, as we saw above, fiction is by far the most translated genre, at least for the cases we chose as examples. Yet, even within the genre of fiction, it is obvious that all books do not have the same possibility of being translated. Another element to take into account, for instance, is the success of the book in its home country. A best-seller is more likely to be translated rather than a book that hardly sold any copy. At the same time, the target culture "adopts" some authors, whether they are successful or not, in the source culture. For instance, Erri de Luca is very popular with the French public, as it will be shown in chapter 7, he has enjoyed strong critical acclaim and he is one of the best-selling Italian authors in France. Therefore, it is very likely, if not certain, that all of his books will be translated into French. In this way, the issue of the trends and tastes of the target culture is an important element. Finally, regarding our case study, we can mention the importance of the collections, which is a typically French characteristic of the publishing industry. When a book perfectly suited to a collection (assuming it has been rather successful in its home country), it is more likely to be translated abroad.

"Et puis il m'avait envoyé un livre sur Venise que je trouvais très beau, qui s'appelait *La città ritrovata* et qui avait pour sous-titre *Petit guide sentimental de Venise*. (...) C'est un cas particulier parce que j'ai fait un travail éditorial qu'habituellement on ne fait pas. C'est-à-dire que je ne me suis pas contenté de faire traduire le livre, mais j'ai voulu qu'il soit présenté différemment en France, et je pense que j'ai eu raison. Ici on n'y croyait pas du tout dans la maison, j'ai dû me battre. C'est assez étrange. J'ai même voulu créer une collection autour de ce livre parce que j'y croyais beaucoup. Je ne voulais pas le prendre dans ma collection, je voulais faire une collection de *Petits Guides Sentimentaux*, et alors j'ai un peu, si vous voulez, détourné le livre."

This publisher explains that he used an Italian book that he had received as a pretext to create a collection that he had been thinking about for a while. Perhaps this book would not have been accepted otherwise, insofar as it did not fit with the other existing collections of the publishing house. Here, the system of collections directly structures the choices of the publishers. However, this example shows that the existence of a collection can structure the choices of publication. In other words, the chances that a book will be published can depend on whether it fits into a

specific collection.

7) **There is an unequal balance between imports and exports.** Tables 1 and 2 show that from the total number of translated books, the proportion of books translated into a language is seldom equal to that of the proportion of translations from this language. However, it is quite similar for French (at least until 1996), Italian, Swedish and Hindi, which means that they are not far from equilibrium.

8) **Although his relationship is unequal but, interestingly, this does not imply that the languages of the semi-periphery have become increasingly marginalized vis-à-vis the central languages.** This offers a basis for a dynamic analysis of the introduction of Italian literature in France. Heilbron deals with the Dutch case (it should be remembered that Italy and the Netherlands belong to the same level of the system). He reports that for every six books that are translated into Dutch there is only one book translated from Dutch into another language. For a long time Dutch culture has been characterized by a large openness towards other cultures. In fact, the intellectuals of countries of the semi-periphery have often been, so to say, "isolated cosmopolites" (Heilbron, 1999, p.437): the Dutch read more than they are read. However, throughout the twentieth century, translations from Dutch have increased in absolute numbers, mostly during the first part of the century. There are presently about six hundred Dutch books translated each year, which is twice as many as thirty years ago. This is significant as this increase is accompanied by a literary recognition abroad.

This analysis sheds an interesting light on our case study, as we are dealing with the translation of a literature translated from a semi-peripheral language (Italian) into a more central one (French). This perspective is essential in order to study the effects of globalisation on the position of the linguistic groups of the (semi)periphery. In this respect, this case study fits in with the new questions raised by the recent developments in the world-system of translation, which can be considered as consequences of a more general process of globalisation.

However, from our perspective a limitation of this analysis is that it deals with languages, as opposed to nation-states. In fact, French is not only spoken in France, but in many other countries. At the same time, Italian is official language in Italy and also in Switzerland. The notion of "intraduction", is sometimes used to refer to the translations that constitute a form of literary importation. For instance, Jurt restricts this to literary texts, that he defines as *"représentations symboliques importante d'une société, de l'ensemble des médiations en usage dans une société, dans*

*la mesure où elles sont porteuses de sens*" (Jurt, 1999: 86). This notion, which is now rather widespread in the texts regarding translations,<sup>1</sup> is interesting for our purposes as it illustrates (or even confirms) the theoretical legitimacy of looking at literary imports with the aim of deciphering international cultural exchanges and interactions.

A useful way of statistically examining the relative importance of nation-states in the international book market is to look at the evolution of the '*intraduction*' rates over the years, not only for literature, but also for all categories.<sup>2</sup> This has been done by Ganne and Minon for the years 1985 and 1989-1991 (Ganne and Minon, 1992). The following table is based on both the UNESCO data and their work (figures in italics<sup>3</sup>).

Table 1.7. '*Intraduction*' rates for various countries

	FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	DENMARK	SPAIN	UK	INDIA	NETHERLANDS
1980	11.5		19	18.9	19.5	2.7	1.3	
1985	15	11	14.8/25	17.1	24.6/25	2.5	1.0	28.2
1990	10.7/17.6	11.7/14	25	15.4/18.9	21.1/26	3.3	0.5	25.9/24
1994	13	14.1		15.7	12.8		0.6	
1998	16.1	12		15.8	11.4		0.6	

As far as France, Germany, Italy, Denmark and Spain are concerned, there are striking differences in the figures coming from the two sources. For instance, the rate of *intraduction* in France is of 10,7% in 1990 according to the UNESCO data, with 41,720 titles published and 4,461 translations, 18% in 1991 according to Ganne and Minon with 24,909 titles and 4,406 translations (Ganne & Minon, 1992: 64). It would be extremely surprising that the book production would decrease by half within one year. The only plausible explanation is that the UNESCO data includes the reprints, unlike the other source. However, these figures give an idea of the position of the various countries in the world-system.

Unfortunately, neither of the sources are complete and this explains why many figures are missing in the table. In particular, it is regrettable not to have any *intraduction* rate for the United States and Russia. In fact, the only available figures led to the calculation of a rate of 12.1% for Russia in 1994 and 2.8% for the USA in 1995. Nonetheless, we can make a few observations, the most striking being that France is the only country for which, at least from the beginning of the 1990s, the *intraduction* rate has constantly increased, from 10 to 16%. Conversely, the figures for Spain have decreased steadily, from almost 25% in 1985 to 11% in 1998. This is interesting in

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to know when it was first introduced, but it has already been used by Ganne and Minon (1992), for instance.

<sup>2</sup> The statistics on book production by country and by year are available on the UNESCO website ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)).

<sup>3</sup> The Ganne and Minon data is for 1989, 1990 or 1991 according to the cases.



terms of cultural domination, as we have shown that a higher proportion of translated books from the overall publications in a country indicates that it is penetrated to a greater extent by foreign cultures. The fact that France is progressively losing its strength on the international scene is very important from our perspective.<sup>1</sup> As far as the semi-peripheral languages are concerned, this table illustrates the core-periphery structure highlighted in the analysis of the translation imports per languages as presented above. We can thus transpose Heilbron's analysis in terms of countries. We see that the Netherlands, Denmark and Spain belong to the semi-peripheral countries, even though Spain is coming progressively closer to the central ones (here we are dealing with the translations published in Spain, thus excluding all of the Southern American countries). At the same time, France is moving to a less central position and Germany to a more central position. Overall, the distinction between central and semi-peripheral languages is not as clear if we look at intraduction rates rather than translations imports.

Finally, the case of India represents an exception: we look at the proportion of translations into Hindi from the total number of books published in the country, but we have to take into account the fact that Hindi is not the only language in India, and thus that in reality there are more translations, in proportion, than it seems.

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At this stage, we have seen, on the one hand, the idea that the study of translated literature has to be envisaged within a target culture and on the other hand, a world-language system and a world-system of translation which describes the rules of the circulation of texts between countries. The first part of the analysis takes the literary aspect of texts into account, and the mechanisms of including the translated texts in target cultures. The second part lies on a more concrete level and it relates to the mechanisms of circulation, which is analysed in terms of domination between languages (and to a large extent between countries). This dichotomy reflects a duality of levels that can be related to one of our questions: how can we generalise the Franco-Italian level of analysis? The question is to understand how the analysis of the mechanisms of diffusion of Italian literature in France can be connected to the global system of languages. The point is not only to analyse these exchanges in terms of French domination of Italy, but it is also to understand whether the current transformations in the process of translation from Italian into French can account for a more general trend within the global system. In order to go beyond this dichotomy, we need to provide answers both at the theoretical and at the empirical levels. In

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 2 for in-depth historical analysis of the position of France.

theoretical terms, in order to link the literary dimension to that of the circulation of texts, we will analyse the relationships between literature, language and the nation-state. In other terms, the idea is that the world-system of translation, to the extent that it does not directly include the notion of "literarity" of texts, might not be a sufficient framework for analysing domination from our perspective. It is thus necessary to situate ourselves within a wider system, that we may call the international literary space. Empirically, the change in the publication of Italian novels in France cannot be understood without looking further at the transformations of the structure of the publishing world that took place over the past twenty years.

We will firstly present a few observations on the relationships between literature and nation state and, in line with Casanova (1999), we shall show how such a system was created and structured. We will then look at concrete illustrations of the international literary space. In the concluding section of the chapter, we will focus on the structure of the French publishing world.

### **3. TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL LITERARY SPACE**

#### **3.1. Observations: national literature and the nation-state**

"As the basic units of the world-system of translation are language groups, the object of analysis is the structure of the translation flows between these language groups. Language groups do not always coincide with nation states: some of the more central languages – English, German, French, Spanish – have a supranational character" (Heilbron, 1999: 432). Before going any further, the links between language, the nation-state and literature call for further clarification. De Swaan (1993: 241-243) shows that the final result of the process of language unification in Europe is that a single language has been adopted by almost all of the inhabitants in most European countries. These historical antecedents have largely determined the present process of language integration at the supranational level, to the extent that they have contributed to the association of states and languages. We shall follow Casanova and define language as the necessary vector to understand the relationships between the state and literature. Through language they contribute reciprocally to the other's foundation and reinforcement (Casanova Pascale 1999). She contends that both the formation of the State and the emergence of literatures in new languages follow the same principle of "differentiation". European states emerged through the affirmation of their differences and rivalries, and consequently this led to the appearance of a first kind of international political field in the sixteenth century. In this emerging

political field, which can be described as a system of differences, language is a fundamental marker of differences. It is also the crossroads of struggles that intersect the recent political space and the emerging literary space. This is why the paradoxical process of the birth of a literature is rooted in the political history of states. As a result of its structural dependence, the worldwide literary space is created through inter-national rivalries, both literary and political. Thus, literatures do not emanate directly from national identities, but it is constituted through international rivalries and literary struggles.

According to Casanova, literature has been progressively freed from the initial influence of the political and national authorities and the institution and legitimation of which it contributed to. As a result of its specific history (namely, the invention and accumulation of techniques, literary forms, narrative solutions, etc. - what the Russian formalists call 'procedures' -), the literary space can gradually become autonomous and exert its own independence and rules within political nations. In this sense, Casanova's perspective can be understood as a bourdieusian perspective, where the notion of field and autonomy are relevant in the understanding of power relations. Consequently, the writers can, individually or collectively, refuse to submit themselves to the national and political definition of literature. Briefly, the freedom of worldwide literary space takes shape through the gaining of autonomy of each national literary field: struggles are freed from political imposition and henceforth they only follow literary laws (Casanova, 1999: 60-61). *"Il n'y a pas de littérature nationale sans contacts interculturels qui font alterner une volonté de distance radicale et la nécessité de processus de traduction, qui sont à la fois une appropriation de l'altérité, un détour pour parler de soi-même et peut-être aussi la reconnaissance d'une altérité intime. Quand on aborde les étapes historiques de constitution d'une littérature nationale, on ne peut manquer d'observer la présence obligatoire de références à l'étranger"* (Werner, Espagne, 1994). This analysis provides additional evidence for the importance of translations in the processes of construction of national literature. One of the main features of these processes is that they can only be understood in the light of the construction of the nation-states.<sup>1</sup> Another feature is the continuous presence of the other as a point of reference. A national literature can achieve autonomy if it integrates the other in its own definition. The attainment of autonomy by all national literature is a condition for the autonomy of the whole worldwide literary space.

In this light, another concept shall be introduced, namely that of "cultural transfers". In fact, this idea of autonomous national literature needs to be related to the link between literature and the nation-state, as mentioned above. In this way, it is possible to perceive literary flows between nations as cultural transfers. This notion was invented in the mid-1980s, and it was launched by a

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<sup>1</sup> This is true at least for European literature. It is not the case for Hebrew and Arabic literature, for instance.

group of French researchers who were working on the nineteenth century intellectual histories of France and Germany.<sup>1</sup> *"Ce n'est pas tout à fait un hasard si le terme de transfert évoque à la fois des flux financiers, des déplacements de population et l'un des moments de la cure psychanalytique. En effet un transfert culturel engage aussi bien la vie économique, démographique, psychique et intellectuelle des groupes sociaux mis en présence, même s'il est vrai que la vie intellectuelle est plus propice à l'observation d'imbrications qui concernent des choses et des personnes mais surtout leur interprétation symbolique. (...) Les transferts culturels, même s'ils peuvent concerner les relations entre deux tribus amérindiennes, sont plus particulièrement liés à l'auto perception des groupes comme nation"* (Espagne, 1999: 1).<sup>2</sup>

This idea of the nation is closely related to that of national culture, which cannot be envisaged without that of vernacular languages: *"La notion de culture nationale implique la mise en place d'une différence qui naît notamment de l'utilisation des langues vernaculaires, et au-delà de l'intégration au système des échanges de groupes sociaux fortement ancrés dans des constellations locales ou régionales"* (Espagne, 1999: 18). This can be related to Heilbron's description of the formation of the world-system of translation. Once the nation-states are culturally constituted, we can envisage the flows of cultural goods and ideas as transfers, to the extent that many dimensions that are part of the idea of nation are involved. From this perspective, translations are symbolically important: *"Un transfert culturel est une sorte de traduction puisqu'il correspond au passage d'un code à un nouveau code. Or si les habitudes sociales au sens le plus large du terme constituent bien des codes culturels, la langue reste le code paradigmatique. L'histoire des traductions, aussi bien au sens propre qu'au sens figuré, est donc un élément important des enquêtes sur les passages entre cultures"* (p. 8).

At a more concrete level, the circulation of books is a way of conveying codes to the target culture. This sheds new light on the idea of literary autonomy introduced by Casanova, and on the link between literature and nation-state, on the one hand, and between world-system and world literary system, on the other.

<sup>1</sup> This project is based on an article: Espagne Michel and Werner Michael, "La construction d'une référence allemande en France 1750-1914. Genèse et histoire culturelle", *Annales ESC*, July-August 1987, pp. 969-992. See also Werner and Espagne, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of cultural transfer is also fruitful in our perspective because it allows go beyond the notion of comparative analysis. In 1928 already, at the Oslo international congress of historical sciences, Marc Bloch insisted on the necessity to compare national histories, but to the extent that they had been in contact. In the theory of cultural transfers, the focus is precisely on these points of contact between national societies, but from a diachronic point of view. It describes a process, which leads to the formulation of a historical questioning. From the interpretation of this process also emerge features regarding singular national societies.

### 3.2. The international literary space

#### *Constitution*

How was the international literary space constituted? Its history is a long process of the collection and concentration of literary resources. Casanova asserts that there were three main steps in its creation. The first step involved the initial formation of the space, and it can be situated with the publication of the *Deffence et illustration de la langue française* by Du Bellay in 1549. This is what Baggioni refers to as "first ecolinguistic revolution in Occidental Europe" (Baggioni, 1997: 73-94).<sup>1</sup> the monopolistic use of Latin is replaced by the claim for the use of vernacular languages, and the constitution of literature that is able to compete with the antique grandeur (Casanova, 1999: 72). The second step was the so-called "lexicographic revolution" (the expression was first used by Anderson) that took place from the end of the eighteenth century until the very beginning of the twentieth century. This corresponds to the appearance of new nationalisms in Europe, and also to the affirmation of national languages. Popular literature was used as a symbolic element of the national idea. Finally, the last step in the creation of the international literary space was the process of decolonisation, which enlarged the literary field and brought new protagonists however, it has so far been ignored by the system in the international literary competition.

So, the international literary field progressively came to light from the sixteenth century onwards. One after the other, countries began to claim literary legitimacy and existence. This led to the constitution of what Casanova calls '*République Mondiale des Lettres*'. In this model, the representation of the world as peaceful and homogeneous is denounced. Here, the history of literature was the history of literary rivalries which created the world literature. The writers were in competition with one another, and their aim was the specific value defined in the world literary space. This had several dimensions including: a market where the literary "economy" takes place and a prestige which is defined by professionals. Clark even established a series of "indicators of literarity" for the countries, such as the number of books published yearly, the book sales, the average reading time per inhabitant, the number of publishers and the number of bookshops (Clark, 1987). In her analysis, Casanova thus enlarges De Swaan's analysis of the world language system (De Swaan, 1993) by introducing a very important dimension, namely the literary value. She uses the term '*littérarité*' in a way that is similar to Jakobson, which signifies the aspects which a language or a text literary, or what allows us to call it so (Casanova, 1999: 33). Literarity includes the linguistico-literary capital of languages within the international literary space and the idea of a

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<sup>1</sup> We are referring here to the third chapter of the book, called "La première révolution écolinguistique en Europe occidentale (XV-XVIème siècles) – Du latin universel aux langues communes".

literary value. She specifies that this value is linked to translations, that cannot be reduced to the strictly linguistic capital of a language. In this sense, this value needs distinguish the indices of centrality as defined by De Swaan in the context of the 'world-language system' (De Swaan 1993).

*"Dépendant de l'histoire de la langue, de la nation politique, ainsi que de la littérature et de l'espace littéraire, le patrimoine linguistico-littéraire est lié aussi à un ensemble de procédés techniques élaborés au cours de l'histoire littéraire, de recherches formelles, de formes et de contraintes poétiques ou narratives, de débats théoriques et d'inventions stylistiques qui enrichissent la gamme des possibilités littéraires. Si bien que la 'richesse' littéraire et linguistique est efficiente à la fois dans les représentations et dans les choses, dans la croyance et dans les textes"* (Casanova, 1999: 22). She closes her analysis by saying that an 'index of literary authority' of languages should be invented (p. 35) that would take factors such as the "nobility", the number of literary texts written in the language, the number of text with international reconnaissance and the number of translations into account. This would allow us to make a distinction between *"langues de grande culture"* – with high literarity -, read not only by those who speak them but also by those who think that texts written or translated into that language deserve to be read, and *"langues de grande circulation"*. One way to create this index in practical terms could be to use the criteria used in political sociology. We have shown how De Swaan (2001) proposes to determine the degree of centrality of a language. *"Dans l'univers littéraire, si l'espace des langues peut, lui aussi, être représenté selon une 'figuration florale', c'est-à-dire un système où les langues de la périphérie sont reliées au centre par les polyglottes et les traducteurs, alors on pourra mesurer la littérarité (la puissance, le prestige, le volume de capital linguistico-littéraire) d'une langue, non pas au nombre d'écrivains ou de lecteurs dans cette langue, mais au nombre de polyglottes littéraires (ou protagonistes de l'espace littéraire, éditeurs, intermédiaires cosmopolites, découvreurs cultivés...) qui la pratiquent et au nombre de traducteurs littéraires – tant à l'exportation qu'à l'importation – qui font circuler les textes depuis ou vers cette langue littéraire"* (Casanova, 1999: 37).

The idea of looking at translators as an indicator of the literarity of a language is very interesting for our purpose, and we will now show how it applies to the translators of Italian literature in France.<sup>1</sup>

### ***The translators from Italian within the field of translation in France: an indicator?***

The only available list of translators in France is the repertoire of the ATLF (*Association Française des Traducteurs Littéraires*)<sup>2</sup>.<sup>3</sup> It is not exhaustive, of course, as not all translators are members of the *Association*, but it is the only institution which provides a list. The people who sign up seek some

<sup>1</sup> As far as the first criterion is concerned, namely the "literary polyglots", we will show the variety of actors involved in the diffusion of Italian literature in France in chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> Here, *"littéraires"* means that the texts translated are (parts of) books, as opposed to newspaper articles, film subtitles, and so on. They are not necessarily literary in the sense of pertaining to literature.

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Répertoire des traducteurs membres de l'ATLF*, 2002.

visibility on the market, since this list is usually used by potential clients who need the services of a translator. Moreover, this association provides its members with advices on the fares, the signatures of contracts, and also a legal assistance. There are other associations, often at a regional level, but they usually concern translators of a specific language. Some of these translators can also be members of the ATLF.

There are about 850 translators referenced in the repertoire. In total, the classification by language ("translators from") contains 1,220 names, which means that on average every individual translates from 1.44 language. English represents 46.4% of the source languages, then comes German with 12.6% and Spanish with 11.2%. Italian is the fourth language of translation with 7.25%. Russian and Portuguese are both around 3.5%, followed by all of the other languages which account altogether for 2%. It is interesting to look more closely at the 85 translators from Italian. Forty-six of them, more or less half, translate literary texts. They also have other specialities, mostly arts and human sciences (on average, they have 1.33 field of specialisation). Italian is not the only language that they translate from (on average, 2.07 languages). As regards the 39 translators who do not work on literary text, the variety of the fields of specialisation is larger (human sciences, philosophy, music and musicology, history, practical life, sciences and politics), but the average number of fields is roughly the same (1.28). The number of source languages they work from is also the same in average (2.05), and the degree of variety is homogeneous. Overall, the most common languages are: English (45% of the translators from Italian also translate from English), Spanish (14%), German (11%), Portuguese (7%), Russian, Latin and Greek (6% each), Hungarian (3.5%). This is followed by Turkish, Danish, Norwegian, Dutch, Polish, Catalan and Chinese which are source languages for only one translator each, which represents 1.2% of the total. Among the 46 "literary" translators, only 19 translate from Italian, which constitutes 41%. Among the 39 others, they are 16 (41% also).

The first general observation is that there is no structural difference between the population of translators dealing with literature and the others. Secondly, it is striking to note that almost half of the translators from Italian also translate from English. Among the 50 translators from Italian who have at least two source languages, this proportion is of over three quarters (38 translators out of 50). In fact, there are only 35 out of 50 translators for whom Italian is the only source language. This could mean that few translators are specialised in Italian, that there are many "occasional translators" from this language. In fact, among the 400 translators of our corpus,<sup>1</sup> only 25 are members of the ATLF. As only around 75 had translated more than 5 books between

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4 for in-depth description of the corpus of books.

1982 and 2001, the proportion is one third of our translators of Italian literature.<sup>1</sup> All of this means that the translators from Italian often have another occupation, which has priority. They are often publishers or professors. The above analysis shows that they can also be translators from other languages, mainly English, and work occasionally with Italian. In the analysis of a questionnaire addressed to the members of the ATLF in 1988, Julie Vitrac showed that there are three types of translators: full-time, part-time and occasional.<sup>2</sup> The distinction is made on the basis of the proportion of the income coming from translations. For occasional translators, who represent a third of the members of the ATLF, translations provides less than 30% of the income. In the case of translations from Italian, there is thus two dimensions of the term "occasional": one is related to another occupation, while the other is related to another language of translation.

This section aimed to look at the number of translators from Italian to have an idea of their relative weight in the global population of translators in France. Numerically, they represent only around 7%, which is quite significant compared to other "small languages". This confirms the idea of a "second circle" including German, Spanish and to a certain extent Italian. Conversely, it appears that a rather small proportion of translators from Italian do this as their main occupation, and even if they are full-time translators, they usually also translate from other languages. This image fits the various illustrations of the position of Italy and the Italian language in France that we have analysed so far.

### *Paris: a disputed centre?*

Casanova also presents the structure of the system, and especially a fundamental issue, namely that Paris, due to its unique configuration of political freedom, elegance and intellectualism is the centre of the system.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, "*Liberté politique, élégance et intellectualité dessinent une sorte de configuration unique, combinaison historique et mythique, qui a permis, dans les faits, d'inventer et de perpétuer la liberté de l'art et des artistes*" (p. 42). This role also finds its roots in various historical processes, among which the French Revolution; Paris has played a unique role in the constitution of the international literary space. "*Cette configuration unique a été renforcée et manifestée par la littérature elle-même. La construction inlassable d'une représentation littéraire de Paris, les innombrables descriptions romanesques et poétiques de Paris au XVIIIème siècle et surtout au XIXème siècle, sont parvenues, dans les faits,*

<sup>1</sup> To the extent that no other source is available, statistics regarding one third of the population can be considered as interesting anyway.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.adf.org/documents/enquetejulievitrac.pdf>, see p.3

<sup>3</sup> According to Ramuz (Ramuz Charles Ferdinand, 1938, *Paris. Notes d'un vaudais*, republished in 1978, Lausanne, Editions de l'Aire, p.65), Paris is "*la banque universelle des changes et des échanges littéraires*" (universal bank of literary changes and exchanges), quoted in Casanova, 1999: 41. See also the work edited by Christophe Charle and Daniel Roche on cultural and symbolic capitals (Charle, 2002).



à rendre manifeste cette 'littérarité' de la ville. (...) Tout se passe comme si la ville de la littérature parvenait à convertir littérairement des événements qui font date dans l'univers politique, renforçant encore, par cette métamorphose, la croyance et le capital parisiens" (Casanova, 1999: 43-44). Heilbron expresses the same idea with regard to the French language: "The role of French in early modern Europe is a case in point. Given the central position of French in European culture, not only French books but also translations into French attracted special attention from authors, translators and publishers. French translations were often retranslated into other languages" (Heilbron, 1999: 435). This is why Paris has been the capital of this '*République des Lettres*' for a long period, in France and throughout the world. One of the remaining questions is whether Paris is still the centre of the system and if so, who is this position maintained.

Nonetheless, the international literary space has other very specific characteristics. Geographically, it is based on the opposition between a capital and regions which depend on it; it has specific forms of consecration; there are some discoverers; and there is an international literary law. It does not contradict Heilbron's world-system of translation. On the contrary, the latter fits in the description of the former to the extent that translations are only one way of legitimising literatures which have been dominated.

In this context, we shall question what it means to translate a text. How can a text written in a weaker language be recognised within a dominant literary space? This scheme, inspired by Casanova's analysis (Casanova, 1999: 188-193), helps us to take into consideration the meaning of translation:

1 dominant language → dominated language 2

translation

4 dominated language → dominant language 3

1. In this situation, translation is part of the process of the international diffusion of central literary capital. The dominant source languages entertain and develop, especially due to the polyglots of the "small" countries, the power and prestige of their nations. Furthermore, this operation is a diffusion of the central norm.

2. Translation – which is an *intraduction* – is a means of gathering literary resources for the dominated country. It can thus import famous universal texts and, "embezzle" a literary fund. An

example of this is the program of translation of the classics implemented by the German Romantics. *"L'intraduction, conçue comme annexion et réappropriation d'un patrimoine étranger, est un autre moyen pour accroître un patrimoine. C'est la voie adoptée notamment par l'Allemagne romantique. Pendant tout le XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, en effet, à côté de « l'invention » et de la fabrication de la littérature comme émanation nationale et populaire, les Allemands vont tenter (...) de détourner à leur profit les ressources littéraires gréco-latines pour constituer le patrimoine qui leur faisait défaut"* (Casanova, 1999: 322).

3. For the dominant language, translation is a way of annexing books and adding them to its repertoire; *"le capital universel s'accroît"*, says Valéry,<sup>1</sup> due to the activity of the consecrating translators. The domination that they exercise on the others obliges them to have a role of *"découvreurs"*, and to give a chance to non-indigenous writers, as long as they are in conformity with the central literary norm.

4. This is the translation-consecration, the literarisation of dominated languages, which acts like the award of a literary certificate.

Our case study thus belongs to the fourth case, namely translation-consecration. According to the author, the translation of Italian literary books into French contributes to the literarisation of Italian literature. In this way, it gives it autonomy and allows it to overtake its dominated position. *"Je définis ici comme littérarisation toute opération – traduction, auto-traduction, transcription, écriture directe dans la langue dominante – par laquelle un texte venu d'une contrée démunie littérairement parvient à s'imposer comme littéraire auprès des instances légitimes"* (Casanova, 1999: 192).

This analysis offers a new perspective, which allows us to analyse the introduction of Italian literature in France as a process of consecration, literarisation and autonomisation of Italian literature. Moreover, the idea of considering Paris as the centre of the international literary space, in the light of Heilbron's description of the world-system of translation – with English as hyper-centre – gives us further insights into the international flows of translations. We will now look at the flows of literary books between various countries and question the discrepancy between the configuration of the international literary space and the world-system of translation. In particular, we will look at the place of France and French literature in the movements of books and translations and try to shed new light on the possible generalisations of our case study.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Casanova, 1999: 191.

#### 4. THE LITERARY DIMENSION: FLOWS OF LITERARY BOOKS

##### 4.1. The importance of literary translations

To what extent can we consider translated literature as "representative" of the overall trends in translations, including all genres? Does the evolution of the flows of literary books reflect the general evolution of book flows? From a statistical point of view, to what extent can we assert that it makes sense to look at literary translations in order to understand more general mechanisms of the flows of cultural goods?

*Table 1.8. Percentage of translations in the publication of literature<sup>1</sup>*

	FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	SWEDEN	SPAIN	UK
1980	16.2		32.6	40	30.8	4.6
1985				42.3	31.2	4.3
1990	25.3				31.2	
1994	27	42.6	5.6		18.9	
1998	28.1		14		17.6	

Unfortunately the data is quite scarce. However, there are identifiable differences. The percentage of translations in the total publications of literature is over 40% in Sweden (and in Germany in 1994, but the lack of data makes it difficult to draw a general conclusion). It is between 16% and 31% in France and Spain, but with opposite trends: the rate is clearly decreasing in Spain, which means that national production is progressively gaining importance in comparison with translated literature. Conversely, French literature is losing importance facing translations. This supports the idea of a French "literary decline" that we often came across throughout the interviews<sup>2</sup>, and confirms the above analysis which concluded that French is becoming less central in the world-system of translation. Then, the figures are quite striking for the United Kingdom, where only 4% of the published literature is translated. This obviously confirms the idea that English is a hyper central language and that there is some kind of English literary domination.<sup>3</sup> We must be careful not to understand this as a contradiction of Casanova's description of the international

<sup>1</sup> This table uses two sources: the *Index Translationum* for the number of literary translations and the UNESCO statistics for the number of literary books published in each country.

<sup>2</sup> This will be largely analysed further on.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, there is too little data available for the United States. In this context, we should not draw conclusions pertaining to English language but strictly pertaining to the UK. However, if we look at 1995 and 1996 (the two years for which there is data regarding the USA), the book production of these two countries is rather unbalanced: respectively 101,264 and 107,163 books published in the UK, 62,039 and 68,075 in the USA. Therefore, we argue that it makes sense to draw conclusions as regards English language from the data pertaining to the UK. In any case, they represent indications of a trend.

literary space, as we need to include other dimensions in order to get the full picture. The conclusion we can draw here is that at the strict level of the number of books in circulation, there is a clear domination of Anglo-American literature, and a loss of importance of French literature, to the benefit of the Spanish one, among others. The Italian case is particular to the extent that the figures appear to be quite incoherent, and there is not enough available data to confirm or invalidate this.

*Table 1.9. Percentage of literature from the total productions of books<sup>1</sup>*

	FRANCE	ITALY	UK	GERMANY	SPAIN	SWEDEN
1980	41.2	21.3	21		25.3	30.5
1985		22.6	22.5		35.6	30.4
1990	26.4	24.4			30.6	29.2
1994	29.3	27.5	20.1	18.4	30.8	23.3
1998	32.3	24.2	19.9		29.5	23.9

This table shows that literature represents at least 20% of the books published from 1980 onwards in the six countries chosen. It is higher in Sweden, France and Spain than in the United Kingdom and Italy. This can probably be explained by the large production of scientific books in the UK and of art and religion books in Italy. In any case, literature is the biggest category of books published. In this respect, it could be asserted that these figures are representative of the overall production of books (thus including translations). The next step is to consider this proportion as regards translated books.

*Table 1.10. Percentage of literary translations from the overall translations*

	FRANCE	ITALY	UK	GERMANY	SPAIN	DENMARK
1985	59.6	25.6	38.6	57.7	26.7	66.9
1990	62.3	40.5	42.9	56.1	62.4	63.4
1994	60.8	48.5		55.7	45.5	61.5
1998	57.3	37.6		54.1	45.7	62.5

The proportion of literature is much higher among the translated books than in the overall book production, for all of the countries that we are looking at. For instance, for France in 1994, literature represents more than half of the total translations. Overall, the proportion of literary

<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://portal.unesco.org/uis/TEMPLATE/html/CultAndCom/Table\\_IV\\_5\\_Europe.html](http://portal.unesco.org/uis/TEMPLATE/html/CultAndCom/Table_IV_5_Europe.html) Unfortunately, the UNESCO statistics are incomplete, therefore we have almost no data for Germany, for instance. The same applies to the following tables. This data relates to countries and not to languages, this is why the analysis switches to the national level.

books among translations is more than half. In this respect, we could say that in the context of translations it is extremely relevant to focus on literature.

#### 4.2. Literary flows within various countries

*Table 1.11. Distribution of literary translations for various countries (the figures within brackets are the absolute values, the others are the percentages).*

		FROM FRENCH	FROM ENGLISH	FROM GERMAN	FROM SPANISH	FROM ITALIAN	TOTAL
ITALY	1980	21.5 (180)	49 (410)	12 (100)	3.4 (28)	X	85.9 (836)
	1994	16.7 (83)	54.2 (270)	8.6 (43)	5.0 (25)	X	84.5 (498)
	1998	12.7 (128)	58.8 (615)	6.5 (68)	6.5 (73)	X	74.2 (1047)
FRANCE	1980	X	70.9 (1530)	10.5 (226)	3 (65)	2.8 (60)	87.2 (2159)
	1990	X	72 (2000)	6.6 (184)	6.8 (190)	4 (110)	89.4 (2777)
	1994	X	70.8 (2538)	5.8 (208)	4.1 (148)	3.9 (140)	84.6 (3583)
	1998	X	70.6 (3116)	4.4 (195)	3.9 (171)	3.1 (137)	82 (4415)
UK	1980	27 (126)	X	23.4 (109)	3.4 (16)	3.9 (18)	57.7 (466)
	1985	25.8 (132)	X	23.7 (121)	4.7 (24)	7.1 (36)	61.3 (511)
GERMANY	1994	8.3 (462)	71.5 (3959)	X	2.2 (120)	2.8 (156)	84.8 (5541)
SPAIN	1980	19.4 (432)	55.3 (1232)	9.3 (208)	X	6 (133)	90 (2227)
	1985	20.1 (792)	51.4 (2025)	10.8 (426)	X	3.7 (146)	86 (3943)
	1990	17.5 (618)	58 (2051)	7.6 (267)	X	5.2 (183)	88.3 (3534)
	1994	15.2 (392)	61 (1571)	6.8 (175)	X	3.1 (80)	86.1 (2576)
	1998	14.7 (426)	57.5 (1669)	7 (203)	X	4.2 (123)	83.4 (2903)

The structure of the Italian imports differs from the others as the proportion of books translated from English is relatively lower, even though it remains high (more than 50%). However, this is increasingly less evident, as this proportion is rising. Conversely, the percentage of books translated from French and German has clearly decreased. This means that the Italian market has been progressively opening up to Anglo-American literature to the detriment of the more 'traditional' literatures of import, namely French and German. The fact that the translations from Spanish have comparatively increased confirms the idea of a slow decline of these two bodies of literature in Italy. In the next chapter, we will show that this corresponds to a progressive emancipation of this country from the traditional schemes of cultural domination in Europe.

In France, the proportion of translated Anglo-American literature has remained stable since 1980, and it represents more than two thirds of the literary imports. In this case, we can again observe a decrease in the translations from German and a slight increase of those from Italian (this will be analysed in more detail in the next section). It is interesting to note that France is, from the countries we are looking at, the most open to English. It may seem paradoxical, to the extent that France is supposed to have a key position in the international system, but in reality, it

shows the discrepancy between the symbolic and the statistical levels: France (especially Paris) is considered as a literary centre, but this relates to a type of literature that has large symbolic prestige and recognition, whereas the statistics take into account indistinctly all kinds of literature. This implies that the publication of commercial novels are much more numerous than those of symbolic literature. Actually, to the extent that the American publishing industry produces and exports many commercial books, we can say that the role of the US, even though it has no direct visibility, is relevant at the statistical level. The discrepancy between the symbolic and the statistical levels illustrates the existing tension between two types of literature, commercial and symbolic (noble), and thus between two spheres of the publishing world. This distinction is crucial from our perspective and further analysis will be carried out through the dissertation. With regard to table 1.11, the structure of the imports in Spain has not gone through very clear transformations, apart from a slight decline in the translations from French and a slight increase of those from English. In regard to Germany, the lack of data makes it difficult to draw any conclusion. It is the same for the UK, however, we can observe that translations from French and German represent almost half of the imports. It would be interesting to know whether this proportion still remains today.

#### **4.3. Translations from Italian into French along the Twentieth century**

We will use two different sources for the description of the trends in the translations from Italian into French throughout the twentieth century:<sup>1</sup> for the period 1900-1991 and for the years 2001 and 2002, Danièle Valin's bibliography and, for the period 1992-2000, we will use the National Bibliography of the French National Library. The reason why the first source was chosen for the years 2001 and 2002 is due to the fact that the second source has unfortunately not been updated yet. However, the fact that we are using two different sources raises an important issue: is it possible to compare them? There are no major structural differences between both sources. In Valin's work, we only used the category "novels-essays" (we did not take theatre and poetry into

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<sup>1</sup> The most obvious source for the evolution of the literary translations from Italian into French throughout the twentieth century is Valin's bibliography (Valin 2002), who offers a precious tool as her work is the only unified source for the whole twentieth century, which allows for a description of the trends in the past hundred years. For each book, the information available includes: author, French title, original title, translator, date, publisher, collection, number of pages. The author of the bibliography kindly gave us an electronic version of it, but unfortunately it was only available as a Word file. In order to use her work as a basis for a description of the evolution of the publishing houses, authors and translators across the century, it needed to be converted into an Excel file. This was possible – even though it was quite laborious – but it might have led to the loss of some information or to some errors. Therefore, we will only use this database for describing trends, and possibly for checking the references of some books if necessary.

account). As far as the BNF catalogue is concerned, we decided to include two categories: 823 and 824, which correspond to the following genres:

823: novels, short stories, recites, tales, children books, comics

824: essays, varia, discourse, humour<sup>1</sup>

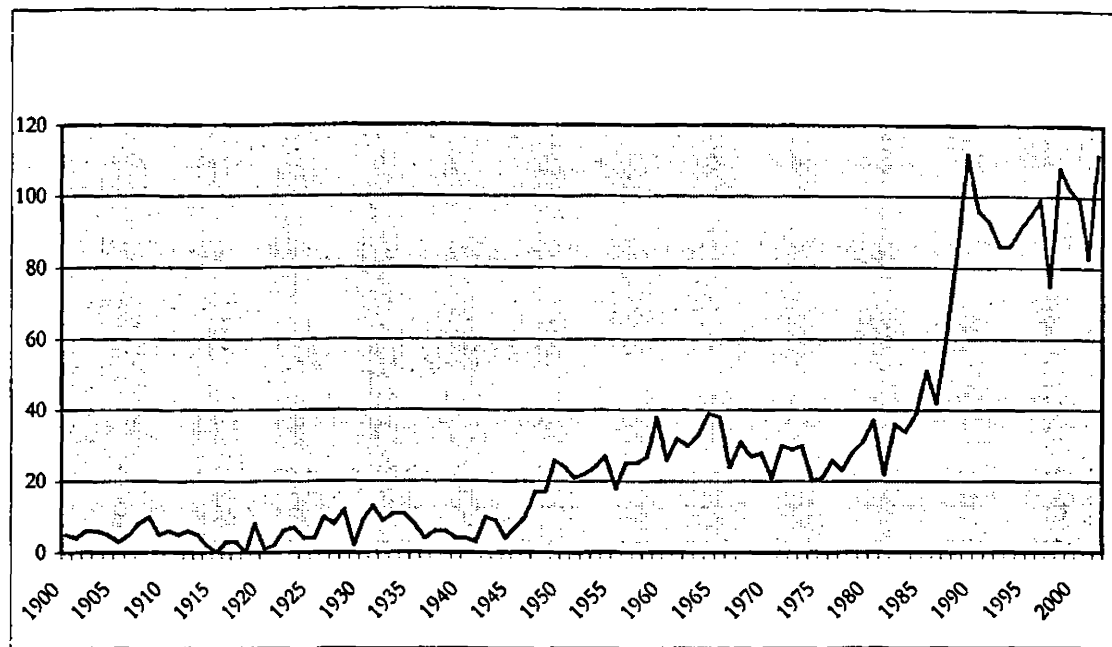
Children books and comics were then excluded from the list. The comparison between bibliographies extracted from the two sources is therefore theoretically possible, as they cover almost the same genre of books. As far as the period 1992-2000 is concerned, there are some differences. Some books were included in one list and not in the other, and there was not always an obvious logic to the lists. Nevertheless, a comprehensive analysis could only be attempted by combining both sources in order to reduce the numerical differences.

<i>DATE</i>	<i>VALIN</i>	<i>BNF</i>	<i>COMBINATION</i>
1992	75	76	86
1993	77	73	86
1994	78	84	91
1995	78	86	95
1996	78	88	99
1997	64	67	75
1998	70	100	108
1999	70	94	102
2000	76	91	99
total	666	759	841

This table shows that the combination considerably improves the reliability of this data. When books were present on Valin's bibliography but not on the National Bibliography, it is almost always because they did not belong to the categories 823 or 824. BNF categories are very strict, and the fact that some categories are excluded led me to forget some books that Valin had identified by other means. For instance, the category 92 contains biographies, memoirs, and genealogy. The fact of excluding it, and thus not sticking firmly to the choice of categories mentioned above, can be easily justified, as they do not usually include narrative fictions. If all of them would have been included systematically, it would have altered our results as it would include some genealogy text book, for instance. However, if we assume that Valin systematically scanned the publication of novels, it could arise that some of them are called "historical", because they take place in different periods of time.

<sup>1</sup> [http://bibliographienationale.bnf.fr/Livres/M14\\_01.H/cadre823-1.html](http://bibliographienationale.bnf.fr/Livres/M14_01.H/cadre823-1.html)

*Graph 1.1. The translation of novels from Italian into French, 1900-2002*



From this graph, we can distinguish four periods between 1900 and 2002. Firstly, between the beginning of the century and the end of the 1940s, the number of novels translated from Italian and published in France varies between 0 (in 1915 and 1919, for obvious reasons relating to the First World War) and 13 (in 1931). There is no regularity in the oscillations however, as the number of books is extremely low, a decrease from 13 in 1931, to 3 in 1941 does not lead to any possible conclusion (apart from the fact that during the period of economic crisis in the 1930s, the publishing activity is slightly lower in France, which is not surprising). It would be interesting to understand the influence of the instauration of the fascist regime in Italy on the level of translations; however, one could assume that it probably does not make a big difference as far as the novels are concerned. The impact of the new regime had more of an impact on national production through censorship, rather than on foreign production. During that period, the global number of translations from Italian can be considered to be marginal, however, this would make more sense in comparison with other languages. Since no data is available on translation before 1979, it could be useful to compare these figures with the publication of French novels. Unfortunately, there is no data available on this either, as the CD-Rom of the French National Library starts from 1970.

From 1947 to 1981, the number of books varies between seventeen (in 1947) and thirty-nine (in 1964). In this case, there is again no regularity; the median slightly increases until the mid-sixties, and then it slowly decreases until the end of the period.



One can assume that these first two periods only reflect the global evolution of the publishing industry in France which was quite slow until the Second World War, and then it took off from the end of the 1940s onwards and progressively stabilised at a higher level of production.

The third period, the 1980s, is far more striking. Between 1981 and 1989, the number of books increased from 22 to 112, which means that it multiplied by more than five. Apart from the period between 1985 (51 books) and 1986 (42), and to a lesser extent between 1982 (34) and 1983 (32), the increase is constant and exponential. Between 1986 and 1989, the number of translations increased of 266%. Finally, in the 1990s, the curve started to oscillate again, between 75 and 112 (respectively in 1997 and 2002),<sup>1</sup> however the number of publications stayed at the level that it reached at the end of the 1980s. These are the two phenomena we will deal with in the in-depth analysis, namely: why does the number increase so abruptly in the 1980s? And why does it remain so high in the 1990s?

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Today, the situation in the international literary system is evolving. It used to be dominated by Paris, nonetheless it is now becoming a polycentric and pluralist world where London and New York (and places such as Rome, Barcelona and Frankfurt) are disputing Paris' hegemony. However, French literary power is still significant in the United States, particularly in the field of philosophy at the American universities.<sup>2</sup> Paris continues to support the writers coming from the countries furthest from the centres. In addition, although the flows of books are still going mainly from the centre to the periphery, there are increasingly more varieties (particularly between peripheral countries). Translation used to be a slow process, however it is becoming faster: it is now common to publish books at the same time in the original language and in the translation. This corresponds to another characteristic of the present system: national patrimonies used to be autonomous and able to encourage (literary) innovation, but the content of books today has become denationalised, homogeneous and uniform between countries.

Overall, the evolution of the international literary system can be theorized as a transformation of the type of domination that used to prevail. In other words, the political independence of literature has given way to an economic dependence, whose way was paved by the process of globalisation. London and New York are increasingly important in the international literary space

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<sup>1</sup> It reaches 112 in 2002 but this is certainly directly influenced by the fact that the Paris Book Fair had invited Italy as guest country that year, and therefore more books were released precisely then.

<sup>2</sup> Evidences can be found in the success of Lacan, Foucault and Deleuze.

because of the generalisation of the commercial models and the progressive domination of the economic sphere on the political and the cultural stages. At an empirical level, this means that the publishing world is being transformed, as Bourdieu described (Bourdieu, 1992). According to him, two systems have historically coexisted within the publishing world. On the one hand, there is an 'economic pole', which follows the rules of so-called globalisation. In this way, books are treated like any other commercial products and the idea of literary value is less important. The books are translated mainly for economic purposes (for example, in the case of international best-sellers). These publishers rely on commercial networks. Their production cycle is very short, and the risks are anticipated by the adjustment to demand. Success is the only guarantee of value for a book. On the other hand, the 'symbolic pole' is oriented towards the production of symbolic capital. The publishers of this pole make long-term symbolic investments that may very well never bring any economic capital. The production is oriented towards the future, and there is a clear need for cultural and social capital. Any book encountering economic success is regarded with suspicion. The structure of the publishing houses of this pole is based on family business, and the owner is often the publisher as well. The reaching financial balance is perceived as a necessary condition for publishing the books that are part of the intellectual/literary project of the house, but in any case the profits are never very high. The search for literary quality takes precedence over the quest for financial gain.

What is happening nowadays? There has always been a certain polarity, however, today, it seems that one of the logics has increasingly begun to dominate the other, the situation is becoming more unbalanced. Casanova clearly displays how this duality exists in the analysis of the international literary space: *"Ce qui est en jeu aujourd'hui dans l'espace littéraire mondial, ce n'est pas l'affrontement ou la rivalité entre la France et les Etats-Unis ou la Grande-Bretagne. C'est la lutte entre le pôle commercial qui tente de s'imposer comme nouveau détenteur de la légitimité littéraire à travers la diffusion d'une littérature qui mime les acquis de l'autonomie (et qui existe aussi bien aux Etats-Unis qu'en France) et le pôle autonome, de plus en plus menacé aux Etats-Unis comme en France et dans toute l'Europe par la puissance du commerce et de l'édition internationale. L'avant-garde américaine est, aujourd'hui, aussi menacée que l'avant-garde européenne"* (Casanova, 1999: 233-234). In fact, this phenomenon is not so recent and has been dealt with in detail. Already in 1982, Coser, Lewis and Kadushin, in their extensive analysis of the American publishing industry, have shown how the book industry had become a large-scale industry from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, and how the market for books expanded to become a mass-market, a large-scale industry. The authors also show that, more recently, "many formerly independent houses have been taken over by large corporations, and other houses have "gone public" and are traded on the stock market. (...) Most major houses

have rationalized their procedures by installing contemporary management practices borrowed from other industries" (Coser, Kadushin, Lewis, 1982: 8). In 1999, Schiffrin also looked at the American publishing world and emphasized the – dangerously – decreasing concern for editorial (and literary) quality (Schiffrin 1999).<sup>1</sup> The transformation that is taking place can be described as the increasing domination of the commercial logic over the symbolic one.<sup>2</sup> This is a complex phenomenon. Janine and Gred Brémond present it as an increasing importance of financial criteria, which they break down into two dimensions (Brémond, 2002: 37). Firstly, the growing influence of the "majors" on the commercialisation of books and secondly, the progressive interference of the marketing logic in editorial decisions. As far as the French publishing world of Italian novels is concerned, the first dimension will be described in chapter four when we will look at the publishing houses involved in these publications – focusing on their size, the group that they belong to, among other things. This description will allow us to assume that the transformation of the French publishing world described by the several authors that we have mentioned relate to the houses who publish Italian literature. This provides further confirmation of the fact that translated literature is a good prism through which we can analyse the publishing world in general (Bourdieu, 1999: 23). The second dimension highlighted by Janine and Greg Brémond calls for further analysis. According to these authors, the editorial decisions cannot be deciphered simply through the prism of the house's belonging to a financial group.<sup>3</sup> From the results of our fieldwork, the interference of the economic logic in the editorial decisions will be shown, and we will demonstrate how it is connected to other issues, such as the definition of the expectations of the public, or the image of literature in general and Italian literature in particular.

We have drawn the lines of a theoretical framework of analysis of the introduction of Italian literature in France. This analysis makes sense in the context of a progressive domination of the economic logic of the international literary system and of the growing importance of the economic pole compared to the symbolic one in the publishing industry. The introduction of Italian literature into France will be envisaged as a case study of a book flow from a semi-central country to a central country. However, we will keep in mind the former position of Paris in the international literary space and the implications of the decentralisation of this space. The necessity of considering Italian literature within the French cultural system means that it is

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<sup>1</sup> We saw in the introduction that there have been many studies undertaken on this phenomenon.

<sup>2</sup> However, if we take the resistance of the symbolic pole into account, then we can speak about polarization: the opposition between the two poles, even though one is weaker in comparison to the other, it is stronger than ever.

<sup>3</sup> Even though these two dimensions are related to each other; *"les concentrations sont accompagnées d'un glissement des pouvoirs au sein de la chaîne éditoriale. (...) Les structures qui se situent en aval de la filière éditoriale, services commerciaux et logistiques, réseaux de diffusion et de distribution (...) jouent un rôle croissant dans la décision d'éditer. Ils peuvent, dans une large mesure, apprécier les créations qui « méritent » ou non de bénéficier d'un accès au marché"* (Piault, quoted by Brémond, 2002: 41).

essential to examine in detail the consolidation of the French cultural nationalism and the role of Italy in this process. Therefore, we will, firstly, elucidate the premises of the action. In particular, we will need to find out how representations of Italy have been constructed in France over the centuries, and how they make sense within the French cultural context. In order to describe the background to this question, we will then describe the attitude and behaviour of the French publishing world towards Italian literature. A first step will be to understand what representations of this world are held by its members. This also involves questioning the nature of this world, as the polarization of the international literary system finds expressions within the national fields of publishing. In fact, there is a tension between the literary scene on the one hand, which conveys the literary value of books, and the book market on the other, which imposes economic constraints on the publishing choices. This tension will be analyzed through the elucidation of the mechanisms of the decision-making that lead to the publication of books. For instance, we will investigate how the French publishing world reacts to the tension mentioned above, and how the actors of the publication process refer to the increasing importance of the economic logic. However, according to the theoretical framework that we wish to adopt, it is impossible to perceive these transformations without considering the relationships between the target culture and the source one. We will thus also look at the images of Italian literature in France (as the product of centuries of construction of a cultural image of Italy in France, but not only), and try to understand whether the tension between French attitudes towards Italian literature, on the one hand, and the implementation of mechanisms of publication which are becoming more economically constrained, on the other, can be interpreted as an expression to the progressive domination of the commercial sphere over the symbolic one.

## Chapter 2: Historical perspectives on the representations of Italy in France

One of the main questions we want to answer is that of how the mechanisms of decision-making that lead to the publication of Italian novels in France operate; in particular, we want to decipher the interference of the commercial logic in these decisions. We assume that they are – at least to a certain extent, that is not constant over time – influenced by the actors' representations of Italy and Italian literature. Italy and France's histories are intertwined and thus have reciprocally influenced each other at many levels for centuries. Since the fifteenth century, cultural relations between these two countries have often turned into a kind of competition, leading to a construction of (or against) the other. This is why we argue that an analysis of these relations, and especially of the way they have been perceived in France since the Renaissance, is a necessary starting point to understand the image of Italy – especially at the cultural level - in France today. Our purpose in this chapter is thus to show how representations of Italy in France have been constructed in the past; however, we cannot understand the way the French have progressively built up an image of their neighbour country without exploring as well the constitution and the nature of the image of France in Italy.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the historical construction of representations necessarily occurs through a certain reciprocity and interaction. We will first analyse this process in historical perspective, and then decipher the main features of the representations of Italy in France today, especially within the field of publication of Italian literature: we will see that there are patterns in time that are still part of the representations of Italy today.

### 1. A HISTORICAL APPROACH: THE ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATIONS

The following section considers how the images of Italy were portrayed in France and, more precisely, how the visions of Italian culture in France were constructed in the modern and contemporary eras. In this context, the term culture signifies intellectual and scientific production, but also historical artistic heritage - to the extent that it is perceived as such. There are two dimensions in these images: on the one hand, they are constructed by the intellectuals, and consequently reflect the common representations that characterise every historical moment; on the other hand, they are a posterior analysis made by the historians, and interpretations of

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<sup>1</sup> Even though we will look in details at the construction of France's image in Italy.

archive material. We shall analyse the way these representations were created and have been maintained or modified in some way in relation to specific historical events.

This inquiry aims to provide new forms of interpreting the contemporary relationship between France and Italy in relation to cultural goods. That is to say, to illuminate the historical determinants for the interest of the French in Italian culture and vice versa. For this purpose, we shall, firstly, describe a turning point that occurred from the middle of the seventeenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century in the intellectual and scientific lives of France and Italy which led to modifications in the image that each country had of itself and of each other. This gives new bases to the relationship, that became unequal from the eighteenth century on - French culture is more easily exported than Italian culture - and this persists today. An analysis of the origins and the consequences of such unbalanced exchanges will be the object of the second section.

### 1.1. The turning-point of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

*"Laissons l'Italie ; en-dehors de Vico (...), elle a peu à dire et Vico est à part"* (Waquet 1989: 1).<sup>1</sup> This is the first sentence of Waquet's work on the seventeenth century turning point regarding the intellectual relationships between France and Italy, and it is typical of the vision of Italy in French historiography of the eighteenth century. This idea was already present in France from the seventeenth century: *"L'Italie, c'est rien"*, declared an anonymous French writer around 1670.<sup>2</sup> In return, in the seventeenth century, Italian intellectuals deplored the ignorance that foreigners showed towards them, particularly the French. However, this relationship used to be different: during the Renaissance, the two cultures were united, and until the middle of the seventeenth century Italianism was very fashionable in the French salons. The turning point with which shall now be described began around 1660. We shall, firstly, analyse the facts, in other words the objective situation of Italian and French intellectual and scientific productions during that period. Secondly, we will show the bias in the historiography which describes this reality. Finally, we shall attempt to understand where the negative image of Italy in France originated from.

The following section is largely based upon Françoise Waquet's work on this topic (Waquet, 1989). In her introduction, she draws attention to the abundance of studies regarding the

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<sup>1</sup> "Let's leave Italy. Except from Vico, it has very little to say, and Vico is another thing", in Pierre Chaunu (1971: 285) quoted by Françoise Waquet (1989).

<sup>2</sup> "Italy is nothing", quoted by Françoise Waquet (1989: 2), from Di Tocco Vittorio (1926), *Ideali d'indipendenza in Italia durante la preponderanza spagnuola*, Messine, p. 276.

influence of France abroad, especially in Italy,<sup>1</sup> and to the frequent use of texts written by travellers. However, French knowledge about Italy was much older, as many curious French people had gone to live and work there throughout the centuries and had often communicated their impressions of the country through letters and visits. Nonetheless, it seems that none of them played a major part in Italian intellectual life, and nor did the travellers. For this reason, Françoise Waquet proposes that we should be cautious in using the testimonies of these intermediaries: they must be related to the complex processes that influenced their role, in order to avoid generating mechanistic explanations. Thus, Waquet highlights the fact that these two sources have been over-valued in historiography. This point is important for this analysis, as it does not aim to present the perception of Italy by French travellers in the seventeenth century; intend, it will show how this image has been constructed in France by other means, and conversely, how it is linked to the image of France in Italy.

### *Intellectual and scientific production in France and Italy in the seventeenth century*

French humanism began to develop after its Italian counterpart, and from the onset it attempted to distinguish itself and create its own specificity, which led to the reinforcement of cultural rivalry between France and Italy. Three events exacerbated the rivalry, that was primarily literary, before it turned political competition. These included Petrarca's critique of the French intellectuals when he went to Paris around 1360, the death of Charles V in 1380 and the dispute for the location of the papacy (between Avignon and Rome). Indeed, the primacy of Italy in Europe was undisputable at that time, with Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio as testimonies of the existence and awareness of Italian literary tradition as an autonomous space. Despite the persistence of different languages and the birth of regional cultural consciousness, Italy was still perceived as a unified space three centuries later, and its primacy in Europe was indisputable, largely as a result of the reputation of its literature. In comparison, France was considered less centrally positioned in European intellectual circles. However, from the middle of the seventeenth century, the number of French scientific and literary publications increased significantly, and the works improved in their variety and originality. The production was characterised by critical moderation and erudition, and the will for scientific truth and moral rigour. This spirit came - at least partly - from the wish to occupy a more central place on the European scene. In other words, the French attempted to get the first place after centuries of Italian cultural domination.

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<sup>1</sup> She mentions, for example, Bédarida Henri, Hazard Paul (1935), *L'influence française en Italie au 18<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Paris, and Dardi Andrea (1980), "L'influsso del francese sull'italiano tra il 1650 e il 1715. I. Inizi della moda francesizzante e considerazioni preliminari", in *Lingua nostra*, XLI, pp. 1-19.

Louis XIV – who reigned between 1643 and 1715 -, together with Colbert, established a cultural program aiming to glorify monarchy through veneration of the king himself. The creative forces of the intellectual and artistic elites were oriented towards Academies, luxury products, sciences and to a certain extent conquest. The *Roi Soleil* kept on exalting this creative impulse and its promotion abroad. Culture had never been so controlled by the State. This development was symptomatic of the increasing power of the State during the reign of Louis XIV, who concentrated all its powers. Centralisation, unification of city administration and juridical uniformisation were the bases of absolute monarchy. The French state was the most centralized in Europe, and thus very strong. In this light, economic statism, initiated by Richelieu, converted the economy into a political means at the service of the State. This process is described, among others, by Tilly in his analysis of the way the growth in the capital intensity and complexity of warfare has led over time to a strengthening of the state and an expansion of its role (Tilly, 1990). In particular, this led to the emergence of national state economies for literature and arts – among others -, which formed the institutional background for the "Grand Siècle".

At the same time, the middle of the seventeenth century corresponded with the beginning of the decline of Italian intellectual and scientific primacy. Historical texts mention for example the juridical formalism, the lack of innovative works regarding Antiquity, increasing poverty and even problems of depopulation. The serene acceptance of its cultural superiority during the Renaissance period in Italy was progressively replaced by the traumatic awareness of its backwardness vis-à-vis the greatest European nations in terms of culture and civilisation. In response, the Italian intellectuals attempted to re-read their literary tradition in a more unified way, to create common cultural structures in order to reclaim their primacy in Europe. This was the departure point of a huge work of revision of the Italian literary patrimony that influenced all of the cultural production in the eighteenth century and led to the creation of a history of Italian literature that had not previously existed (Mauviel 2000).<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is interesting for the purpose of this thesis as it demonstrates the effective poverty of the Italian cultural production at the time. The efforts were increasingly concentrated on creating a proper literary history rather than on actually increasing the literary patrimony of the country. Another interesting example of this was the attempt by Muratori in 1703 to implement an official institution bringing together all of the Italian intellectuals in order to unify and fight for the renewal of the *Primato*.<sup>2</sup> This did not lead to any significant results, and in the eighteenth century, the European literary journals usually referred to Europe rather than to the Italian literary space, in contrast to the previous centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> But the local literary histories were present in almost every single town, academy, religious order in Italy (Cuaz, 2000: 20-25).

<sup>2</sup> Literally, this means *primacy*. With regards to Muratori's work and the anti-French polemic, see Cuaz (2000, p. 23).



### *Caricatured images?*

However, it seems that these historical visions of the state of intellectual and scientific movement in France and Italy did not completely reflect the reality of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Various studies clearly emphasized the French revival and the Italian decline, although it is important to stress that these findings are somewhat misleading. As far as France is concerned, the publication of scientific books was subject to censorship during the reign of Louis XIV. The discovery of new ideas was under the control of the royal and religious authorities and, consequently, scientists and intellectuals had great difficulties in diffusing their work. This aspect of French society provided a more nuanced idea of the profusion that is usually highlighted in the historiography of this period. The same observation can be applied to Italy: the in-depth analysis of Italian historiography shows that there is a controversy regarding the decadence mentioned above (Waquet, 1989: 213 and following). There were a certain number of technical problems that made it difficult for the work of Italian scientific and intellectual community to be diffused in their own country and, a fortiori, abroad, such as printing difficulties, and also the lack of reliable networks for diffusion. The level of censorship from Rome was also very strong (in particular, the ecclesiastic authorities were very reluctant to deliver licences). These problems can – at least partly – explain the decadent image of book production, and consequently, the superficial image of Italian culture at the time.

Therefore, it appears that the way the Italian and French cultural work were depicted at the time should be presented in a more nuanced way.<sup>1</sup> There are indeed some differences between the two countries, but the images which emerge from most of the studies on the topic should be seen in perspective as they only partially reflect reality.

Another way of thinking about these differences consists in analysing the image of Italian erudition in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the first half of the seventeenth century, translations from Italian enjoyed considerable success in France<sup>2</sup> but, however, this trend quickly lost its momentum. From 1660 onwards, the sales of Italian books in Paris started to decrease, and the translation and publication of contemporary books almost disappeared. Only the classics, such as Boccaccio, Petrarca or Machiavelli, kept on being sold

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<sup>1</sup> This is extremely clear in the latest work on the topic (Waquet, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> In 1650, Claude Cramoisy even started an important collection of publication of the most famous Italian texts (Waquet, 1989, p. 33)

with success. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Italian literature represented only 3.2% of the translations published in France (Waquet, 1989: 33).<sup>1</sup>

So, it seems that in the seventeenth century the interest of the French public had set on the classics rather than on the contemporary literary and scientific production. According to Martin (1969), this phenomenon arose from the indifference of the French public rather than from the negligence of book-sellers and librarians. Furthermore, the French specialists on Italy seldom assisted in the diffusion of Italian contemporary culture in the seventeenth century. They were supposed to have a deep knowledge about Italy and its culture and to help to keep the French in touch with it. However, due to the climate of intellectual rivalry, they did exactly the opposite: they used their intellectual experience to provide additional evidence of the Italian decline. The curiosity of the seventeenth century French intellectuals reverted to the past. Travels to Italy went on, but the travellers no longer sought to be taught by a prestigious master, nor did they accept the supremacy of the Italian intellectual endeavour. They were motivated by what remained of the grandeur of the Antique Rome, namely the legendary richness of museums, monuments and libraries.

It appears from this analysis that the French public progressively lost interest in contemporary Italian intellectual and scientific works and focused on the Italian heritage from Antiquity,<sup>2</sup> and that this obviously encouraged and accentuated the negative image of Italy in France. In contrast, the Italians had a rather positive image of France. French scientists were often considered as models, and France as "*terre promise du savoir*" (Waquet, 1989: 170).<sup>3</sup> At certain times, this admiration even tended to degenerate into servility, and then led to a form of disdain towards Italian works by the Italian themselves. The reference to France was omnipresent in Italian intellectual life. I would even be argued that at that time Italian culture could not be understood without taking into account the existence of a French norm as this was a constant point of reference and comparison. Hence, there was an unequal exchange between French and Italian elites. Nevertheless, the inequality of this exchange as it is described in historical texts should be given a more nuanced reading. At this stage, it seems clear that historians were describing real facts to a certain extent, but they also have slightly over-emphasised the images and stereotypes of the French revival and Italian decline.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure does not make sense on its own, but it is difficult to find data regarding earlier periods, and. As Italian literature was widely read by the French public until the seventeenth century, we can assume that 3.2% represents a small percentage.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Scipione Maffei's palaeographic studies were not well-received in France at the time.

<sup>3</sup> "promised land of knowledge". I chose not to dwell on the admiration of the Italians for French intellectual life here in order to focus on the image of Italy in France.

### *The image of Italy in France*

Where do these images come from? We saw above that France considers Italy as a subaltern country, which no longer belongs to the *République des Lettres*. However, it also appears that the differences lay more in the *idea* that each country had of its relationship with the other rather than their effective relationship. The question can be phrased differently: why did the interlocutors amplify the gap between them? In this respect, Françoise Waquet makes three fundamental statements (Waquet, 1989: 270). Firstly, the relations between French and Italian scientists as they existed in the 1660s have a very long history; secondly, the idea of opposing national characters whose presumed existence is based on observation is quite superficial (in other words, we need to understand what really distinguishes the French and the Italians); and finally, we need to take into account the ability to communicate, the mutual aptitude to play the game of intellectual exchange (which means that we need to identify the internal dynamic of communication).

Therefore, in order to understand from where the negative image of Italy in France is derived, it seems important to return to the genesis of this intellectual attitude. The original conflict goes back to the fourteenth century, when the French humanists revolted and attempted to affirm the existence, force and originality of their culture (Simone, 1969). In 1368, the question of the return of the papacy to Rome was raised, and this led to a violent polemic between leading intellectuals of both countries, Petrarca<sup>1</sup> in Italy and Jean de Hesdin in France. From the end of the fourteenth century onwards, the Italians, led by Petrarca, claimed the heritage of the past and the succession of the writers of the Antiquity, as they asserted to have the exclusive possession of knowledge. Consequently, the French struggle to obtain the primacy of the empire of *Lettres* can thus be read as a reaction to the Italian intellectual attitude. From the middle of the Sixteenth century, the French began to elaborate a gallic legend, proclaiming the superiority of their ancestors vis-à-vis the Ancient Rome. Between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the idea was put forward that French history was never subjected to foreign influences, in other words, that French culture did not owe anything to the 'classical' civilisation. This idea came as a response to the Italian attitude and in this way the French prevented any attempt to compare the two cultures or to draw conclusions regarding their contemporary intellectual works. The affirmation of the originality of the French model necessitated a devaluation of the Italian model.<sup>2</sup>

In the first half of the seventeenth century, many intellectuals and scientists from all countries went to stay in Paris, which became a European centre of attraction. France was gaining self-

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<sup>1</sup> He famously stated on one occasion that there were "no orators nor poets outside Italy", which was a direct reference to France.

<sup>2</sup> In this respect, the critique of Roman Law in France at that time is significant. The sixteenth century also witnessed increasing interest in creating a French Law.

confidence and reaching a state of tranquil superiority, and this led to the development of a critique of travel in Italy. From the seventeenth century, the image of Italy was progressively transformed into a land of moral and religious perversion, and this stereotype remained and became even stronger throughout the centuries.

In this process of self-affirmation, the question of language played a specific role: the fascination that the French used to have for the Italian languages, and its influence on French literature, had become unbearable for majority of the exponents of this cultural self-affirmation. In reaction against the predominance of the Italian language, they ridiculed it (as if they were comforted by the myth of gallic Hercules) and developed the idea of protecting the French language. As a consequence, France began to rival Italy in its fields of excellence, namely history, law, philology, and – above all – literature. Moreover, attempts were made in France to highlight the strong differences between the two languages and the ways they were used, particularly by the translators. For example, the French would write with a clear and strong style, avoiding repetition and complex sentences, whereas the Italian style was full of repetition and superficial effects. If this was the case, then the Italians could obviously not write scientific texts, they were only able to sketch out thoughts. In France, the intellectuals were convinced that this exclusive passion for formal research and theoretical endeavours provided evidence of a moral void and that a purely aesthetic enthusiasm led to libertinage, scepticism and religious indifference. In 1635, the *Académie Française* was created, born from the idea that the French language, already perfect, would attain a universal status. It would then become the language of scientists, because it would be able to translate the most elaborate thoughts into a precise form. An understanding of this vision is fundamental to our ability to study the issue of translation throughout the centuries.

We cannot deal with the differences between French and Italian languages without tackling the question of communication between these two countries. The idea here is to analyse the relations between them as a practice of communication, namely to highlight the strategies used by both sides, and to explore the conceptions of these intellectual exchanges in Rome and Paris. In France, communication was conceived as one of the fundamental rules of the scientific world, and the importance of stimulating and facilitating exchanges was internalised. In contrast, Italy was noted for its weak communication with other countries, and this was often interpreted by foreigners as a refusal to communicate (for instance, the difficulty in finding manuscripts in the libraries). However, this attitude was clearly one-sided: on the one hand, the Italians worked for the diffusion of new ideas in scientific and intellectual research. On the other hand, they did not

always wish to communicate their results, and for this reason they hid from intellectual exchanges.

From the middle of the seventeenth century; Italian scientists began to realise that the hegemony of their country was being seriously called into question, and possibly overtaken. Nevertheless, they still believed strongly that the French had only improved thanks to the teaching of Italian scientists, thus conveying the idea they had appropriated their discoveries. For this reason, they decided to adopt a reserved attitude: secrecy appeared as a refuge, a defensive practice to keep Italian science alive, since its integrity, and even its existence, were seriously under threat. This attitude was fatal to Italians. The *République des Lettres* continued to work without them and adopted a way of thinking that progressively turned into a set of rules that became a constraint for European literary production. When Italians ultimately returned to the European scene again, they had to make huge efforts to adapt to the new rules.

The situation even deteriorated at the end of the seventeenth century: Italian culture no longer crossed the Alps, and at that stage the Italians decided to react. The first attempt involved a series of individual initiatives: some writers started sending their publications to French booksellers in order to attract their attention. The second attempt consisted of the publication of Italian literary journals abroad; but it was difficult in light of the problems of distribution and the difficulties due to the difference of languages. Finally, the last attempt was the creation of three periodicals (*Bibliothèque italique* in 1728, *Le Journal des Savants en Italie* in 1748 and *Excerptum totius italicae nec non helveticae literaturae* in 1758), spurred on by the realisation of the lack of interest of foreigners in Italian scientific works. These attempts were based on the idea that these periodicals would be more attractive for foreign readers if they were published outside Italy. Moreover, the act of publishing them in French or in Latin testified to the will of replacing Italian culture in the European context. However, these periodicals did not enjoy great success as they lacked originality and were quite disappointing in comparison to French expectations. In reality, France had decided that literary and scientific productions were no longer Italy's strength, which had shifted to non-intellectual fields, such as opera. Italian opera was hugely successful in Paris at the time and, according to the French, this provided an additional confirmation of the failure of Italian *Lettres*.

Between 1660 and 1750, while France gained confidence regarding its intellectual power, Italy felt that its cultural identity was being threatened and started a process to regain recognition from abroad. This was an inversion of the Renaissance trend: the French were no longer interested in Italian literary and scientific production as they had been until the seventeenth century. They

constructed their own image of Italy, which was reinforced by a multitude of novels until the end of the eighteenth century, as an explicitly lazy and tumultuous country, almost primitive in some respects. The Italians were also seen as funny and creative, but by nature they were unable to become real scientists. Throughout the nineteenth century, Italy was increasingly perceived as a museum of Antiquity and Renaissance, and the lack of French interest in the Italian contemporary works would quickly turn into scorn. Indeed, it could be argued that this huge difference in these countries' perception of each other can be analysed in almost sentimental terms, such as admiration and scorn. It is thus striking to remark that this sentimental lexicon is recurrent in the historiography of the eighteenth century, as well as in all of the travel literature.

## 1.2. From the eighteenth century to the present day

### *The eighteenth century and the cultural identity of Italy*

We have shown, from our consideration of Waquet's work (1989) above, the omnipresent role of France was a constant point of reference in the process of constructing an Italian identity. However, several questions remain unanswered, such as what was the result of this process, how did it come to an end and how did Italy react to it?

We shall now analyse the way in which the perception of Italian identity was transformed during the eighteenth century. Cuaz (2000: 14) proposes four ways of thinking about "the idea of Italy" in the eighteenth century in order to address the question of whether an Italian nation existed and what it meant to be Italian at the time. His project focuses on the Italians before the birth of Italy, in other words, the constitutive elements of an idea of Italy before 1796, the starting point of the idea of a unitary state as a political project.

The first way involves the idea of a unified geographical space. The aim here is not to analyse the problem of the southern border<sup>1</sup> but to deal with the changes that occurred in the final thirty years of the century, in particular between 1770 and 1780. Through the notions of "picturesque" and "sublime", the Alps and the Midi were increasingly included in the representations of Italy, as a result of a more systematic and scientific exploration of the territory by the travellers. In this context, the Mont-Blanc, the Aoste Valley, and also Sicily and the Amalfitana coast were literally invented, and created as symbols of the Romantic Italy. These representations thus defined new borders and changed the seventeenth century image of a country isolated by a mountain chain that resembled an impenetrable frontier.

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<sup>1</sup> Sicily and Calabria only belonged to Italy in geographical terms at the time.

The second element conveys the idea of a literary homeland. As mentioned above, there was a strong desire to undertake a revision of the Italian literary patrimony, and although the literary production was not exactly abundant and diversified at that time, this work continued through the eighteenth century and contributed to the creation the cultural identity.

The third point relates to the manners and habits of the Italians. In the seventeenth century, foreigners imagined Italy as a country with extraordinary towns buried under their own ruins and of decadent people. Although the Italians used to be represented as civilised, welcoming, spiritual and gifted with the arts and studies, they were now viewed as deceitful, suspicious and vindictive (Cuaz, 2000: 25-26). The geographical literature of the eighteenth century highlighted these negative aspects. Decadency became the leitmotiv of Italian literature. However, these stereotypes started to disappear from 1760 onwards, which marked the beginning of a new wave of philosophical travels. As a result, some of the commonplaces of the travel literature lost their force. A new image slowly started to emerge from the new travel literature, which signified a plural country, consisting of the juxtaposition of different realities and characterised by the strongest internal differences in Europe.

Finally, the fourth constitutive element of the idea of Italy centres on the birth of nation. From the end of the eighteenth century, Italy became a political project. This influenced the literature of the eighteenth century, which started to portray the idea that a unified Italy would be stronger and richer and would regain its former prestige. In 1796, as a result of the efforts of the Italian Jacobins who were influenced by the French Revolution, the literary myth became political reality. The legitimacy of this unity continued to be disputed. On the one hand, the federalists denied the fact that a unified Italy had ever existed. On the other, those who favoured unity insisted on the fact that there was a community of language, culture, habits and religion that at least went back to the Dante and Petrarca period, and maybe even to the Ancient Rome.

### *French travellers at the end of the eighteenth century*

We shall now address the way in which the French reacted to these changes in Italian cultural identity. Bertrand (2000) has studied the discourses of French travellers in Italy between 1760 and 1810, most of which were structured as sentimental portraits of the peninsula. Their expectations were based on the European accounts in the 1770s, which depicted mountains and images of the south. The ways of travelling were deeply transformed by the French Revolution, and this led to changes in the perceptions of the country.

In his work, the author insists on the difficulty of making the story of Italian "émoi" (*commotion*) in this context. This idea connoted the notion of intercultural shock: it appears from

the texts that the experience of otherness carried a sense of violence, which generated a momentary confusion in the points of reference for society. Is this concept of "commotion" useful when dealing with the French people who went to Italy at the end of the eighteenth century? It seems that most of most of their attitudes remained unchanged after visit, but for others it was a very moving experience, for example for Montesquieu.

A second difficulty that the historian has to face in this kind of work is related to the fact that Italy was not unified. Consequently, the impressions of the traveller when he arrived cannot be read through geopolitical frames. The differences perceived by the travellers did not occur at a cultural level, nor at a geographical, climatic nor social level. They rarely concern the whole peninsula, and this has to be taken into account in any contemporary analysis.

The two main findings of this study are interesting in our purpose. Firstly, the scorn of the French intellectuals towards Italy at the time had strongly conditioned the perceptions of Italy that travellers had before they even set out on their journey. Upon their arrival in Italy, however, their experience differed from what they had expected, and they became aware of the fact that they had to start a process of getting to know the Italians. As a consequence, from the 1770s onwards, some of the French travellers tended to offer a more positive image, to the extent that the Italians were sometimes represented as spontaneous and natural, even though this went against the usual stereotypes (in a positive way). Secondly, the author shows how there was a change in the way that Italy was perceived. It was believed that French travellers entered a period of "commotion", which resulted from their first impressions upon arrival through the Alps. It seemed as if the whole country appeared at the same time and as if the traveller could gain a sense of Italy at first sight. The author focuses on the fact that this general perception was a mental picture, or a construction, rather than a real image (Bertrand, 2000: 59). From this, we can conclude that the French seldom based their views of Italy on a precise observation of reality but instead remained in a closed – and to a certain extent vicious - circle of representations. Ultimately, the expectations regarding the overall impression of Italy were so focused and pre-defined that they led to the creation of new stereotypes, which were different, but which in a certain way were even stronger than in the previous century.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, the literary texts written by the travellers<sup>1</sup> paved the way for the creation of an almost mythical Italian space characterised by some geographical and mental borders that the French could identify more clearly. This idea of a unified Italy is fundamental in order to understand the French vision during and after the process of Italian unification.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes, among others, Stendhal famous travels and the "Stendhal syndrome". See *Rome, Naples et Florence* (Stendhal, 1826).



### *The French image of Italy from the end of the nineteenth century onwards*

At the end of the nineteenth century, while Italy had settled its unification, France had to face the spectre of Germany after the 1870 war. In this context, the fact that Italy belonged to the Triplice maintained a kind of exasperation from the French against the Italians. At this point, they began to exert a strong pressure on the young and recently unified country. The 1880s and 1890s were a period of clashes (violation of the French consulate in Florence, incidents in Eritrea...). The idea progressively emerged among the intellectuals that the tension between the two countries was psychological: the Italian ambassador in France at that time, Giuseppe Tornielli wrote that *"il più importante dei problemi che pesavano tra Francia e Italia, le difficoltà che si opponevano al riavvicinamento commerciale tra i due paesi erano soprattutto "psicologiche"*" (Mauviel, 2000: 125).<sup>1</sup> However, French and Italian intellectuals have not dealt with this subject in a comprehensive manner, and have not yet offered any political, economical or geostrategic analysis. In contrast, some intellectuals from other countries took an interest in the relations between France and Italy. For instance, the famous Portuguese writer Eça de Queiros proposed to distinguish three circles in the psychological relationship between 1880 and 1895 (cited in Mauviel, 2000: 127-129). Firstly, the French constantly accused the Italians of not being grateful, especially for having forgotten the help which they received in their efforts for unification, and also wanted them to stay in a permanent state of "gratitude" towards them. Secondly, with regards to the concept of civilisation, the substitution of Italian primacy (*Primato*) with French hegemony from the Louis XIV era remained a contentious issue. From 1870 on, this led to a feeling of revenge on the part of the Italians.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the anti-Italian feeling in France was deepened by the economic crisis and rivalries in the Mediterranean (reinforced by the Italian allegiance to Triplice). At the end of the nineteenth century, the situation had become tense and it was difficult to understand the nature of the relationship between France and Italy. It seemed that France, almost unconsciously, passed a strong feeling of condescendence towards the Italians, while the latter attempted to free themselves from French domination.

After the French defeat of 1870, the idea arose in Italy that a war with France would solve some of these problems. However, this is not clear from Italian historiography. The diplomatic records of the late 1940s were extremely discrete in this respect.<sup>3</sup> After 1945, the study of intercultural relations between France and Italy became ideologically condemnable; only the

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<sup>1</sup> "The major problem between France and Italy, and the difficulties that prevented closer commercial ties, were mainly "psychological"."

<sup>2</sup> According to Benedetto Croce, this would never disappear from the Italian consciousness (Mauviel, 2000: 127).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, see Derla Luigi "Primato italiano ed egemonia francese nell'età romantica e risorgimentale, in *Mélanger à la mémoire de Franco Simone*, tome III, pp. 13-31.

question of language continued to be an object of scientific research. It is rare to find an article about French hegemony and Italian primacy today, and the issues of prejudices and reciprocal representations are usually avoided.

It is also very difficult to get an insight into these representations during the fascist period. In addition, it is almost impossible to obtain any material regarding this period. From the analysis of "parallel sources", such as correspondence, it is possible to bring to light a few contradictions. For instance, in a letter addressed to Bernard Berenson on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1918, Gaetano Salvemini stated that he would be ready to fight for Tunisia against the French, whereas it was not worth fighting for Dalmatia and the North Istria. This reinforces the idea that the colonial question was directly related to the Italian national identity at the time (Mauviel, 2000: 145-148).<sup>1</sup> For the Italian historian, the French attitude in the colonies (especially in Tunisia) clearly showed that they had always considered Italy as a subaltern country, which was supposed to obey to them.

In order to avoid being accused of being nationalist or – even worse – to be reminded the fascist period, Italian intellectuals ceased to make reference to the Franco-Italian representations after the war. There was a strong censorship of historical documents: if they dealt with these representations in any way, they were usually either not re-published or else "cleaned". This shows the strong will to make changes after the conflict and also, to transform French attitude.

More recently, the representations of Italy and France and of France in Italy have been strongly influenced in Italy by the collapse of Communist ideology, economic success and the creation of a national foreign policy, and in France the pretension of grandeur, the creation of its nuclear policy and the political offhandedness. The Italian media focus very much on the decline of what used to be the pride of France in terms of economy, intellectual life and cultural creation. This, once again, could be a kind of inversion of the images, a new turn in the mutual representations of France and Italy.<sup>2</sup>

Today, on both sides of the Alps, the stereotypes of each other are abundant and common-place: the French are arrogant and individualist, the Italians are lazy and fiddling. As we saw in this section, these images have rather long-standing origins. They have taken root in the collective representations throughout the centuries and it is difficult to imagine that they will disappear, or even weaken to some degree. At the same time, their mutual interest remains very strong, although it manifests itself differently in each country.

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<sup>1</sup> Mauviel also underlines the fact that in Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile's correspondences there was also this half-hidden anti-French feeling.

<sup>2</sup> We would also need to look more closely at the image of France in Italy to draw general conclusions.

In Italy, French was the first foreign language taught at school until the 1980s, and it only fell back to second place because of the explosion of English in all spheres of public and private life. The references to France and French culture are omnipresent in the academic world, the media and educational material. It could be argued that this interest is somehow linked to a form of admiration, which can be traced back to the Renaissance period.

In contrast, the French are rather interested in the rich Italian cultural and artistic heritage from the past. Italian is seldom taught in French schools, where the pupils usually learn English, German and Spanish. There are very few references to contemporary Italian intellectual works in the media, and nor in academic life. It seems as though the seventeenth century image of the Italian inability to produce proper scientific work has somehow remained. However, it should be mentioned that interest in the Italian language has increased in France since the middle of the twentieth century. The augmentation of the number of children choosing Italian at school,<sup>1</sup> the doubling of the number of applications for Italian courses between 1995 and 1999 in the Italian cultural institutes in France and the proportionally significant increase of the articles on Italian literature in the literary supplements of the daily newspapers (*Le Monde* and *Libération*) provide evidence of this phenomenon. In relation to this, we can wonder what kind of image of Italy exists in France today. The question of collective representations is a complex issue, and it could be the subject of an entire dissertation in itself. We will attempt to address this question through the representations of a restricted population, namely our interviewees. It should be remembered that there are two kinds of interviewees: firstly, the Italian specialists, who produce a discourse which is sometimes a reconstruction of what they interpret as the image of Italy in France; and secondly the publishers who have no specialisation in Italian literature, who give us their opinion of what Italy means to them.<sup>2</sup> We will thus look at the representations of Italy within the field of publication of Italian literature in France. In fact, as exposed in the introduction, one of the purposes of this analysis is to understand how these representations interfere in the editorial decisions.

## 2. REPRESENTATIONS OF ITALY IN FRANCE AT THE PRESENT TIME

"L'Italie a été le premier pays découvert par les français dans les années 1950 à travers la chansonnette et le tourisme. C'est le premier pays qu'ils vont visiter, pour lequel les français ont une forme de sentiment assez complexe. C'est à la fois de l'affection, de la condescendance et de l'agacement. Euh... ils ont une forme d'affection parce que c'est un pays sympathique, c'est le pays dont beaucoup de gens se sentent le plus proche, il leur est familier à travers tout un tas de clichés... ils ont une forme de condescendance, aussi, parce

<sup>1</sup> Italian is one of the only languages for which the French Ministry of Education has created new posts in the last three years, whereas the number of posts have been reduced for almost all other languages.

<sup>2</sup> In Annex 1, we make a distinction between these two categories of interviewees.

que les français se sentent supérieurs, de toute façon, par rapport à tout le reste du monde, ils ont une forme d'arrogance, comme ça. Et puis ils ont une forme d'agacement que n'ont pas les anglais ou les allemands, ni les américains non plus, parce que, qu'on le veuille ou non, l'Italie est le berceau de la culture classique européenne, et ça agace prodigieusement les français. Les français ne l'acceptent pas, donc il y a toujours une forme de rivalité entre la France et l'Italie pour savoir qui est le premier, finalement. Et malheureusement, à mon avis, ce sont les italiens qui sont le berceau de la culture classique européenne. Les grands foyers culturels européens, ce sont les Flandres et l'Italie, et les français sont des parvenus qui sont arrivés au 18ème siècle, ils sont arrivés après. Et il y a un malaise, qu'on sent par exemple chez Julien Gracq dans son livre sur Rome, si vous l'avez lu, qui est un livre horrible, qui est un livre de professeur de lycée... alors que j'ai beaucoup d'estime pour Julien Gracq ! Là c'est un prof de lycée qui n'a pas digéré ça, comme certains français, finalement, n'ont jamais digéré la conquête des Gaules... on comprend mal, puisqu'il reste 60 mots celtiques en France... En revanche, les anglais et les allemands n'ont pas du tout ce complexe par rapport à l'Italie, ils n'ont pas du tout cette rivalité, etc." (Paul Matonti)

## 2.1. The constructed image of Italy in France

During the interviews, several questions were posed relating directly to the image of Italy that the interviewee had in mind; most often, it came up in the discussion at some point, and I just had to rebound on what the he or she had just said to deal with the topic. To start with, it was observed that there are two kinds of discourse. On the one hand, there were the specialists – who had already considered the question of the image of Italy in France -, who gave a structured and commented analysis of the French representations of Italy. On the other hand, there were non-specialists, who produced a first hand discourse on the image of Italy in France. In this section, a distinction shall not be made between the two types of discourse, instead they shall be deliberately mingled in order to give an overview of the way in which this image takes has taken roots in the collective representations.

### *A recent shift in the positive image of Italy?*

On the whole, it was found that interviewees' image of Italy was positive:

"L'Italie pour beaucoup est un pays de vacances, avec la culture, les français ont une image très positive. Donc, il y un a priori qui est positif." (Jean Dupasquier)

"Bon, l'Italie, c'est évidemment la dolce vita. A ce moment-là, j'ai commencé à m'intéresser au cinéma, qui ne faisait évidemment pas partie de mes études. J'adorais Antonioni. J'avais pas de culture cinématographique, personne n'allait au cinéma autour de moi, et vers 19-20 ans j'ai commencé à aller au cinéma par Antonioni. Je le voyais en VO, je lisais les sous-titres, et l'italien est devenu très vite pour moi la langue du cinéma. Et quand j'entendais parler italien autour de moi, j'avais l'impression de me retrouver dans un film. Je disais toujours, quand on parle italien j'ai l'impression qu'il y a une caméra quelque part. Donc, je suis parti en Italie pour cette dolce vita." (Damien Leclerc)

The attraction for this country is based on the idea of a certain life style (*dolce vita*).<sup>1</sup> Italian cinema, especially that of the 1960s, has contributed to the development of this myth: Italy is the country with a slow rhythm of life, good food and wine, nice weather and beautiful landscapes. All of these features are part of the largely positive image that the French people have developed along the years and that has been strengthened as Italy is one of the main destinations for tourism. However, it seems that recent political developments in Italy could alter this positive image.

"D'un point de vue culturel, elle est très positive. L'Italie c'est le pays des arts, de la mode, des belles chaussures, etc. et c'est vrai! Les petites entreprises font marcher le pays... Mais d'un point de vue politique, je pense que l'Italie est déqualifiée. Quand le gouvernement français a des questions à poser à l'Europe, à qui s'adresse-t-elle d'abord? A l'Allemagne, à l'Angleterre... et comme cinquième roue du carrosse, à l'Italie. Et comme le gouvernement actuel est en place, l'image renvoyée à l'extérieur par... bon, moi je ne fais pas de politique, je ne dis pas que c'est bien ou mal. Mais je pense que le gouvernement actuel qui est en place ne permet pas de renvoyer une image positive. Quand le gouvernement était un gouvernement de centre gauche, même s'il faisait des bêtises, l'image renvoyée était une bonne image." (Marie-Pierre Leborgne)

"Donc, aujourd'hui, je pense que l'image italienne est un peu ternie par cette politisation et par l'image que la France a de monsieur Berlusconi, qui correspond à une certaine réalité, il faut quand même l'avouer, mais qui est parfois un peu caricaturale. Donc, je pense que tout ça est un petit peu terni par cet aspect politique. (...)  
Je pense que l'image de l'Italie, dernièrement, dans les deux dernières années, a été un peu brouillée pour des affaires politiques. Vous savez qu'en France tout est politique."  
(Guido Pierucci)

These two interviewees emphasize a change in the image of Italy in France, which has been caused by the current Italian government. The interesting point in our perspective is that this image is not fixed in time.

"Bah, c'est pas une image figée... et d'ailleurs, au moment même où on parle, l'image de l'Italie n'est plus celle d'il y a 30 ans, il y a 20 ans, il y a 10 ans, il y a 5 ans, bon. Le phénomène paradoxal berlusconien a fait qu'il y ait une appréhension tout à fait différente de l'Italie, pas seulement du point de vue idéologique... on est assez perplexe de voir ça. Non seulement de voir ça, mais de voir que l'Italie tolère ça. Alors que, de toutes façons, en France, on a des problèmes qui sont... qui ne sont pas peut-être exactement de la même nature, qui ne correspondent pas exactement, mais il y a quand même des problèmes similaires, enfin..." (Claude Muccino)

<sup>1</sup> This expression ("sweet life") is a direct reference to a film directed by Federico Fellini in 1960, a three-hour masterpiece that shows one man's descent into "the sweet life" of debauchery. In this film, Marcello Mastroianni stars as the eccentric journalist Marcello Rubini. The film was banned for many years in Italy because of its depiction of many Italians, at least the rich ones, as degenerate, selfish and spoiled souls, its blatant sexuality, and also because of its substantial, irreverent religious content that offended many Catholics. The use of the expression *dolce vita* is thus in a way misused, as it does not refer to debauchery but rather to a way of taking things easy. Still, insofar as the expression also refers to laziness, it contains something of a moral judgement that has to do with debauchery. As if in the French's mind the *dolce vita* was a dream for holidays but could not suit everyday working life. This ambiguity illustrates the tension between fascination and contempt that was highlighted in the previous section and that we will develop in the following one.

However, the idea that the image of Italy in France has changed was not shared by all of the interviewees:

"Je crois qu'une partie du public a sans doute une image très figée de l'Italie, et donc aime les auteurs qui reprennent cette image-là." (Sandra Di Maggio)

This last quotation stresses the existence of two aspects of the image of Italy in France. The part that changes over time concerns the politico-social situation in the country. Conversely, there is more stable line, which is highlighted by Sandra Di Maggio in the context of literary taste. The phrase "*cette image-là*" is essential in this regard. It has something to do with the *dolce vita* as mentioned above, but it goes further. We will now consider this image through a different prism, namely that of clichés.

### *A stereotypical image*

"Justement, j'y pensais, sur l'image que moi, un français lambda j'avais pu avoir de l'Italie avant, véhiculée évidemment quand vous êtes enfant par les parents. Moi j'avais un père lyonnais, donc très proche de l'Italie, qui aimait bien discuter, négocier. Ça c'est un truc qu'il racontait toujours, il avait ce côté commerçant. Et du côté de ma mère, c'était le préjugé anti-italien, dragueurs irrespectueux, limite voleurs. Donc, j'avais ces deux discours-là. Et je me souviens qu'on n'allait pas du tout en Italie à cause de ma mère. Et les deux fois où on s'y est retrouvés, c'était les mêmes mots que j'entendais, "avanti, avanti". (...) Et il y avait une autre chose qu'on racontait toujours sur les italiens, c'était l'histoire des chars italiens: "vous savez pourquoi il y a cinq vitesses sur les chars italiens? Deux pour avancer, trois pour reculer", donc c'était les italiens pleutres, lâches. Et donc, cet "avanti", c'était le contraire, viril, musclé, ça plaisait pas." (Damien Leclerc)

In the above passage, the interviewee evokes his childhood memories to describe his own image of Italy. The idea of a *préjugé anti-italien* can be related to idea of clichés. The definition (implicit or explicit) of this image by Damien Leclerc has various dimensions. The Italian clichés include the image that they are always talking and discussing issues at length (the parallel is with the geographical origin of his father), that they will talk to anyone, that they are weak and cowardly and even, thieves. However, when he went to Italy, what he saw was in contradiction with this image, which is interesting from our perspective because it gives weight to the idea that there is indeed a preconceived image of Italy in France, based on stereotypical representations. In the interviews with the Italian specialists, this existence of a constructed image came up quite often in the discussion. In terms of content, terms which were repeatedly used were *voleurs*, *menteurs*, *hâbleurs*, *dragueurs* and *pareseux*. Another dimension of this image is that of an Italian folklore.

"Hier j'ai regardé la télévision, ça arrive pas souvent. Ils invitaient un italien dans un programme grand public, il devait parler des pizzas, déjà, il était avec un débardeur blanc et les poils qui sortaient, et moi j'ai vu ça, j'étais horrifiée. Donc, bon, quelque part, ça reste ça. Quand on parle de l'Italie dans les journaux, ou à la télé... Bon, *Le Monde*, c'est différent, on peut pas mettre *le Monde* sur le même plan que la télé, ils font de très beaux reportages. Mais

quand on parle de l'Italie à la télé, c'est pour se moquer de Berlusconi, c'est pour montrer quelque chose sur la Mafia... C'est toujours des aspects très folkloriques, ou très liés au scandale, ou très négatifs. Ça c'est la seule image de l'Italie." (Sandra Di Maggio)

Sandra Di Maggio reduces the French image of Italy to the notion of folklore. It could be argued that her opinion is influenced by the fact that she is Italian, however it is not shared by Anna Moresco, who is also (partly) Italian.

"Je ne sais pas ce que les français attendent, parce que je ne suis pas française 100%, donc ma vision est un peu déformée. Je pense qu'ils ont beaucoup de clichés sur l'Italie dans leur tête. Sur l'Italie et les italiens en général, que ces clichés sont en train de s'estomper, que la réussite économique de l'Italie a certainement redressé un tout petit peu l'image de l'Italie, la mandoline, les chansons, etc. Euh... on s'est dit que finalement, c'était aussi de bons créateurs d'entreprise, bon... Euh... Je ne sais pas trop ce qu'ils attendent. Quand même qu'ils correspondent un tout petit peu à l'image qu'on se fait d'eux, c'est-à-dire, créateurs, artistes aimant le beau, habileurs..." (Anna Moresco)

This vision of the French representations is more flexible than a mere description of clichés. On the whole, there is a constant tension between the stereotypical image of Italy in France and the recent and progressive change which contains positive elements, such as the economic evolution of Italy, and negative elements, as far as the political image of Italy abroad is concerned. This raises the issue of the sources of these clichés. We have already shown that they are historically rooted, yet it is not clear why they remain omnipresent today.

### *Do the French know anything about Italy?*

Many interviewees mentioned the fact that there is an ignorance of the French regarding Italy, accompanied by the belief that they know the country. They often used the example of the Italian language to illustrate this ambiguity. The French think they can speak Italian, although they have never learnt it, and they misread and misunderstand it. This paradoxical attitude is due to the apparent proximity of their language and culture.

"On s'est rendu compte quand on a préparé le salon du livre qu'en France les gens ont une image très positive de l'Italie. Globalement on a une image très positive de l'Italie en France. Alors, à la fois pour un certain art de vivre, une certaine nonchalance, etc. Sans forcément bien connaître le pays. C'est-à-dire qu'il y a une espèce de fausse parenté, on se croit proche, on se sent proche sans forcément bien connaître l'autre. Oui, c'est à l'image de l'attitude française face à la langue italienne: les français pensent connaître l'italien parce que c'est une langue proche, mais en réalité c'est plus complexe que ça... Exactement. Ils ont l'impression de comprendre, ils comprennent rien. Mais malgré tout, ça véhicule quand même des stéréotypes positifs. C'est un domaine où le positif l'emporte." (Jean Dupasquier)

"Je pense qu'il y a un manque d'intérêt de la part des français pour ce pays qu'ils croient connaître. Comme ils croient connaître la langue ils croient connaître le pays." (Paul Darlignac)

"Je me suis aperçu qu'il y a des gens qui prétendent travailler dans l'italien... C'est une langue beaucoup plus difficile qu'on ne pense. C'est-à-dire, c'est comme l'anglais, une langue assez

facile à apprendre, comme ça, de parler, etc. Mais à traduire c'est une langue qui pose d'énormes problèmes, même les choses relativement simples. Simplement, la construction grammaticale de l'italien est très très loin du français et certains textes posent des problèmes... grammaticaux, simplement, considérables. Et là il faut prendre des positions parfois draconiennes. Alors, là, ça prête à discussions diverses et variées..." (Jacques Laplace)

"Ce qui joue, je crois, encore et toujours, par rapport à l'Italie, c'est ce sentiment de proximité que nous avons nous français avec eux, qui est facilité par une langue proche, enfin en tout cas qu'on estime, quand on la connaît mal, très proche, on a l'impression qu'on peut s'en sortir... et on peut effectivement faire du B-A BA assez vite, bien plus qu'avec du russe ou du tchèque. Mais à part ça, donc, ce sentiment, je dirais... il y a quand même une fausse proximité qui fait que les français croient pouvoir, très vite et avec très peu de choses, savoir de quoi retourne l'Italie. Mais c'est pas si simple." (Delphine Vasseur)

"C'est la proximité... c'est toujours difficile de traduire des langues, mais l'italien c'est particulier, parce que... on a toujours l'impression qu'on comprend, enfin plus ou moins... Il y a beaucoup de gens qui parlent l'italien, mais très mal. Parce que, on peut bricoler, puis on comprend. Si vous bricolez un mot français en allemand, personne comprend. Mais en italien, on comprend, donc on fait pas l'effort, quand même. En même temps, le passage d'une langue à l'autre est complexe, parce que les mécanismes sont différents." (Irène Thibaud)

These excerpts illustrate this complex phenomenon, which is based on an apparent proximity. In fact, as Jacques Laplace highlights, it is not impossible for a French-speaking person to get the general meaning of Italian sentences in certain contexts. However, this does not mean that they do not need to learn the grammar, syntax and vocabulary. The apparent proximity induces the idea that there is no need to make an effort to understand, or to be understood. In any case, the reason for this feeling of proximity is due to two obvious factors: their roots in Latin on the one hand, and the existence of a geographical border, on the other. The former is probably much stronger (as testifies the attitude of the French as regards Germany); however, the attitude of the French towards Spain and the Spaniards, its other neighbour with Latin roots, is different, and it seems that the feeling of proximity or kinship is less apparent.

"C'est pas l'exotisme, l'Italie, je pense pas que ce soit ça... Ils ont besoin d'histoires sur la Toscane... c'est un peuple qui leur ressemble. Donc, les souffrances du peuple italien pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, qui ont été un petit peu plus fortes qu'en France, parce qu'il y a eu en plus la guerre civile... Ce sont des choses qui les touchent." (Yves Tessarin)

Yves Tessarin suggests that another factor of this proximity can be found in their political histories. However, it is not clear again why it should be so different with Spain. Finally, we should consider the role of the French institutions as regards Italy (especially the teaching of the language and the diffusion of its culture).

"Il y a par rapport à l'Italie quelque chose d'intéressant, c'est un phénomène de mystère. Tout simplement, qui est tout bête, tout con, c'est lié au fait que l'Italie est l'un des grands pays qui nous entoure, l'un des seuls grands pays qui nous entourent pour lesquels il y a pas eu vraiment de volonté politique depuis que l'école publique existe, depuis que lycée existe, de faire apprendre la langue et la culture. C'est vrai, en lycée on apprend ça en troisième langue. (...) Il y a cet espèce de sentiment de vide qui fait qu'on a besoin de se... de se remettre, je



dirais, de comprendre un petit peu ce grand absent, finalement, de la culture secondaire, de la culture universitaire, aussi." (Henri Jouvenet)

The point raised here – the absence of a political project - enforces the questions raised above regarding both the simultaneous proximity and distance.

"Je vais même vous en dire plus. Les français croient connaître l'Italie, mais l'Italie est le pays le plus méconnu d'Europe. Les français savent pas grand chose de l'Italie, vraiment pas grand chose. Et le peu qui savent, c'est biaisé. Ça ne les intéresse pas, au fond, c'est trop proche. Et l'Italie, c'est très varié, quelqu'un qui connaît bien Florence et les florentins... encore que, pour connaître Florence, il faudrait être à la fois Michel-Ange et Machiavel... à côté de ça, du toscan, de la Divine Comédie, il y a toutes les autres langues. L'Italie est un défi perpétuel. D'abord, pour les ignorants qui se cassent le nez tout en criant qu'ils ont tout lu, tout vu. C'est un défi perpétuel, mais un défi à l'intelligence, aussi. Quand on voit le cinéma, la littérature, moi j'ai entendu des italianistes de renommée dire que la littérature est nulle, il existe Verdi mais il existe pas d'équivalent en littérature, etc. Ça venait de quoi, ça, cette idée qui circulait... C'est de la méconnaissance des langues italiennes. La langue étant l'ADN des civilisations, quand on ne connaît pas sa langue, on ne connaît pas le peuple. Je dis, connaître sa langue parlée, pouvoir comprendre les mouvements du cœur, des mains, des yeux, sa langue totale." (Jean-Charles Zalio)

Jean-Charles Zalio's idea that the French are not too interested in Italy because it is so close brings a new perspective to our question: the French imagine that Italy is extremely close to what they know, and thus lose the curiosity they could otherwise have for this country. This does not mean that they lose interest – they keep on going to Italy and they retain certain images of the country, however, they do not make an attempt to deepen their knowledge of Italian culture and life. In this way, it seems as if they read everything that relates to Italy through the filter of their preconceived representations, and thus do not allow these representations to evolve. This indicates a paradoxical side of the French representations of Italy.

## 2.2. A paradoxical attitude: between fascination and contempt

"Pour revenir à ce que je disais sur le fait... qu'on croit trop savoir ce qu'est la langue italienne... et bien il y a une méconnaissance de ce qu'est la relation langue dialecte chez les gens qui traitent de critique littéraire en France... Ça existe aussi pour d'autres langues... Mais pour les autres langues, par exemple le chinois, j'imagine que le critique est prudent. Mais pour l'italien la prudence ne s'impose pas à cause de ce... moi j'appellerai ça assez volontiers le complexe de supériorité des français par rapport à l'Italie. On se croit très vite capables d'avoir fait le tour de la question, quoi ! Bon, les français qui sont des vrais italianistes, ou italianisants, soit parce qu'ils y vivent... bon, le savent très bien." (Danièle Perrineau)

In the historical section of this chapter, we have shown that since the Renaissance, the French attitudes towards Italy have been characterized by a certain ambiguity between fascination and contempt. This ambiguity can also be understood in relation to the tension between proximity and lack of curiosity that we highlighted in the previous section: the French are fascinated by Italy, and this prevents them from learning more (due to a risk of disappointment). Furthermore,

the French contempt leads to the idea that learning about Italy is an easy task, and thus that there is no need to make the effort. We will now look at the way these mixed feelings – fascination and scorn – are presented by the interviewees, and how this contributes to the construction, the fixity or the evolution of the image of Italy in France.

### *The French between arrogance and contempt...*

Apart from Paul Matonti (see the quote at the beginning of the section), other interviewees drew attention to the French feeling of superiority towards Italy as a particular characteristic of the French.

"De toutes façons, les français, que ce soit face à l'Italie ou à d'autres pays, il faut toujours qu'ils se sentent supérieurs, comme s'ils savaient tout, s'ils étaient mieux que tout le monde".  
(Michel Lombard)

Lying beneath this statement, there is something that can be defined as arrogance on the part of the French. In this way, the feeling of superiority not only relates to Italy but to foreign countries in general. The French perception of the 'other' is oriented by this perception of the 'self' as superior.<sup>1</sup> Which partly explains the feeling of superiority towards Italy. However, we argue that there are also causes that strictly pertain to the relations between the two countries.

"Moi, en Italie, je ressens beaucoup de gentillesse vis-à-vis des français, mais en France je trouve que les gens ont un a priori par rapport aux italiens, qui est très négatif, et qui est très stéréotypé, stupide... l'italien c'est le dragueur, le parleur... ils se sentent supérieurs, c'est très étrange, je trouve." (Laure Fougère)

"C'est dommage, parce que pour quelqu'un qui est d'origine italienne et qui enseigne l'italien, c'est toujours agaçant... c'est vrai que l'Italie est considérée comme le pays de la magouille... c'est vrai, bien sûr, mais comme dans tous les pays... Comme le pays de la Mafia, ça c'est dommage aussi. C'est vrai que la Mafia s'étend comme la pieuvre, mais c'est négatif. Donc, c'est mitigé, c'est positif pour tout ce qui est culturel. Par exemple, c'est vrai que même le cinéma a eu son heure de gloire, maintenant c'est un peu moins vrai, parce que le cinéma italien... même s'il y a Nanni Moretti, ou je ne sais pas qui, on ne peut pas dire que ce soit extraordinaire. Il y a des secteurs de pointe comme la mode, ou les petites industries... je sais pas, je pense à Benetton, ou à d'autres... Luxottica, bon, par exemple... Mais d'un point de vue général je crois que les français ont un complexe de supériorité vis-à-vis de l'Italie..."  
(Marie-Pierre Leborgne)

According to Laure Fougère, this feeling of superiority is based on the stereotypical vision of the Italians. In the second extract, the reasons are less evident, but Marie-Pierre Leborgne describes this feeling as a combination of positive and negative images, with emphasis on the notion of Italians as dishonest or 'fiddling'. The underlying representation of the self would thus be that of a French uprightness and honesty which are some of the values inherited from the *Lumières*.

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<sup>1</sup> This is recurrent in the vision of the French abroad, as they are systematically characterized as arrogant. For instance, at the time of the nuclear test in New Caledonia in 1995, there were many references to this in the foreign press.

"Je crois que l'attitude qu'on a eu en Italie, et qu'on continue à avoir, que ce soit politique, économique, culturel, c'est la même chose, c'est un certain mépris. Nous on fait un complexe de supériorité par rapport aux italiens, on croit que c'est des gens qui bricolent... et moi ça me frappe parce que c'est des choses que j'entends même dans un circuit de personnes assez cultivées... Il y a une condescendance par rapport à l'Italie qui est une chose assez insupportable, d'ailleurs." (Jacques Laplace)

"Je dis mépris, attention, ce n'est pas un mépris affiché. Je dis, c'est une attitude des français par rapport à l'Italie. Par exemple, on s'est gaussés pendant des décennies à propos de la corruption, les scandales, on pourrait dire exactement la même chose! On a eu les mêmes affaires, on a un président de la république... mais bon, on va rire des italiens avec leur président du conseil..." (Irène Thibaud)

These two interviewees both explicitly refer to French contempt and condescending attitude towards Italy. The allusion to the fact that this also exists among the 'cultured classes', is used to show the widespread nature of this feeling. We thus have many testimonies of the existence of such a collective feeling, at least within the interviewees' discourse. Nevertheless, there are very few references to the origins of this attitude. Without going into psychological inquiries, we shall now consider whether there are obvious explanations to it.

"Moi je pense... parce que, l'italien est quand même ce que les français aimeraient être, les français sont hyper complexés, coincés...les hommes surtout.. ils aimeraient être comme les italiens, ils aimeraient avoir la fantaisie des italiens, qu'ils n'ont pas. Je suis sûre que c'est de la jalousie, j'en suis sûre et certaine. Mais c'est vrai que ça existe vraiment. C'est regrettable, stupide...; en plus, c'est basé sur des stéréotypes tellement vieux, dépassés, des films... Aldo Maciome, ça ça a fait un mal aux italiens, ce truc! C'est vrai, ça a fait un mal aux italiens, ce personnage, c'est incroyable! Moi je le déteste à cause de ça. L'importance que ça a eu à l'époque, je me souviens, quand ses films sont sortis... on voyait les gens imiter, sur la plage, on imitait la démarche... moi je trouve... et ça a la peau dure, ces genres de stéréotypes ont la peau dure! Et de toutes façons, le français se sent supérieur aux autres. Partout dans le monde, quand on demande comment on considère les français, ils le considèrent comme quelqu'un d'arrogant, qui critique tout, hautain... qui est en fait à mon avis très complexé, mais qui veut pas le montrer." (Laure Fougère)

Here, the French feeling of superiority towards Italy is based on a secret jealousy as the Italians possess characteristics that the French would like to have, such as lack of inhibition. This analysis is symptomatic of the duality that we have stressed between contempt and a certain fascination.

### *... or fascinated by Italy?*

"L'unico dato che si possa fare emergere è questo, che loro sono molto occupati da quello che è il nostro aspetto di genio e sregolatezza... loro gli affacina, da sempre... Questi italiani così' matti, e però 'tack', the 'knack', come dicono in inglese... ogni tanto scatta fuori un libro curioso.. Loro sono attratti soprattutto dalle figure singolari."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

<sup>1</sup> "The only fact that stands out is... they have focused a lot on our aspect of geniality and madness... they are fascinated, they have always been... These Italians, so crazy, but nonetheless 'tack', the 'knack', as they say in English... once in a while, a curious book comes out. They are mostly attracted by singular figures".

This interviewee refers to the French fascination for Italian creativity, which can be related to the historical background highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. This complements Laure Fougère's idea of the absence of inhibition. For the rest, this fascination is usually evoked in a more abstract way. This can be seen in the way that some of the interviewees mention that this fascination is confined to the intellectuals.

"Donc, néanmoins... néanmoins, si tout est traduit, s'il y a une sorte de fascination réciproque, moi je suis persuadée qu'il y a une sorte de malentendu.

*Mais qui est dû à quoi?*

Bon, il y a, peut-être de façon moins évidente aujourd'hui, une fascination certaine de l'Italie pour la France. Quand on va leur dire, "mais arrêtez un peu", ils sont très étonnés! Je pense que la France vers l'Italie, il y a dans les couches intellectuelles... les intellectuels sont intéressés par l'Italie parce qu'ils ont une certaine culture de l'Italie. Je pense que les classes moyennes ne comprennent rien à l'Italie et voient des clichés."

(Irène Thibaud)

According to these two interviewees, there would be a social division of the French representations of Italy. In fact, the emigration of Italian intellectuals to France during the 1970s and 1980s has paved the way for a climate of exchange favourable to the development of a view on Italy. In addition, this view is strengthened by the idea of *Humanités* that characterized the French classical culture:

"Les clichés restent, et ça je pense que... je pense qu'ils restent très forts. Alors, les gens vont en Italie, mais je pense que c'est un tourisme cultivé, quand même. Avant on allait en Italie parce que c'était moins cher, maintenant c'est parfois plus cher! Donc, je pense que c'est un tourisme cultivé, les gens font une démarche intellectuelle pour aller en Italie. Je pense que c'est un certain niveau de tourisme. Tant mieux, d'une certaine manière, mais c'est quand même... et puis, les choses ont changé, le monde s'est ouvert... avant, le voyage en Italie faisait partie des humanités, et ça c'est resté... Je veux dire, le voyage, c'est quand même... on s'est ouverts vers d'autres cultures. Alors, il y a toujours cette fascination des intellectuels français, pour Naples par exemple... alors que je pense qu'ils ne comprennent rien à la réalité napolitaine. Mais il y a une fascination. Par exemple, le succès de Erri De Luca, je pense que ça vient de cette fascination, ils ont l'impression que c'est une terre inconnue, folklorique... mais ça participe de clichés. Alors, je vais vous sembler un peu... pessimiste... mais je crois pas." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

The reference to the trip to Italy reminds us of the historical constitution of a romantic image of the country, as stressed in the previous section. In fact, it seems as if certain features of that time continued to exist.

"Bon, l'imaginaire des français, en ce qui concerne l'Italie, c'est un imaginaire romantique, c'est Stendhal... Ils en sont restés là. Stendhal il a jamais rien vu, il parle que de l'Opéra, la Scala, il compile des trucs, des histoires, mais il a vraiment rien vu. Il parle de rien. C'est assez étrange, et les français ont toujours cette attitude-là. Ils voient Venise, les monuments, les églises, les tableaux, tout ça. Bon. Et ça c'est... alors, ça marque peut-être un changement, soudain c'est cet espèce de regard filtré sur l'Italie, marqué par la nostalgie, un exotisme proche... soudain ce regard se transmet dans la contemporanéité..." (Jacques Laplace)

Jacques Laplace describes the way this romantic representation finds contemporary expression through picturesque images. In fact, we often find this reference to landscape in the interviewees' discourse

" Il y a aussi une image très romantique, bon, la Toscane. Oui, la Toscane et la Sicile. Mais c'est lié au passé, pas à l'Italie actuelle. C'est une image qui est très liée au passé, elle est très physique, les paysages, donc immuable dans le temps... Quand même, les collines toscanes! La Sicile, parce qu'il y a l'archéologie, c'est l'antiquité, les racines de la culture gréco-romaine. Et la Toscane pour le paysage. Donc, l'Italie, au départ, c'est ça, pour beaucoup."  
(Sandra Di Maggio)

"La perception italienne est toujours malade du paysage. On ne parle pas de l'Italie comme on parle de la Norvège, de l'Allemagne, de l'Irak ou de la Palestine, bon. Qu'est-ce que c'est ? C'est des villes, une culture, une situation, comment tout cela se mélange... mais comment en faire un discours général ? Est-ce que ce discours peut tenir dans des mots ? Ils le figeraient. Je sais pas..." (Claude Muccino)

The idea that landscape does not change over time, reminds us of the fixed image of Italy, that resists the socio-political evolution of the country. However, there are several definitions of landscape. In a very concrete sense, a landscape is a natural setting, but in a more symbolic sense, as stressed by Claude Muccino, it is also an aggregation of various features, such as cities, culture and situations. In fact, a few interviewees provide us with their romantic image of Italian cities:

"Il y a quand même des villes mythiques, Rome, Florence... L'arrivée à Venise, vous sortez d'une gare mussolinienne et vous tombez en pleine Renaissance, je pense que les gens recherchent quand même ça." (Alain Cohen)

*"Vous, qu'est-ce qui vous fascine autant?"*

Les villes. La campagne italienne m'intéresse pas. C'est les villes. J'aime pas les villes trop petites, je trouve ça artificiel, Monteregegni... mais les villes... vous vous promenez à Parme... Se balader à Turin, c'est un bonheur. Moi c'est ce que je recherche, et après, effectivement, j'ai envie de lire des livres sur Turin, je suis tout content..."  
(Yves Tessarin)

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In conclusion, we can note that the tension between fascination and contempt that was at the base of the historical construction of Italy's image in France is present in the interviewees discourse. Of course, we could bring nuances to the terms fascination and contempt: they are sometime only esteem or non acceptance of differences. Anyhow, one of the outcomes of the analysis of the interviews is that there is an ambiguous feeling towards Italy, incarnated by an oscillation between apparently contradictory representations. Besides, we have seen that a part of the image of Italy in France is fixed in time, based on a series of stereotypes, and another part is moving in function of the socio-political context. These two tensions can be related to each other through the idea of romanticism: the fixed part of the image of Italy in France is rooted in the

construction of a romantic representation of the Italian landscape (in a broad sense) since the period of the travels in Italy. We can even speak of romanticized representation, stressing the fact that it is based on features that are part of the heritage of the past but not necessarily real any more. Conversely, the evolving part of this image can be read as a sign of a progressive openness of the French, related to the intensification of the communication between countries (especially thanks to the media). The two tensions (fascination/contempt, fixed/evolving image) thus melt into one: on the one hand, the image of Italy in France is romanticized and historically rooted; on the other, the recent internationalisation of cultural relations have had an impact on this image, whose historical roots are being questioned.

We now want to relate the question of these representations to the introduction of Italian literature in France in the contemporary era. Where does the interest for Italian literature in France come from? Is the flow of literary books from Italy to France in any way influenced or determined by the romanticized representations of Italy in France? Before analysing the configuration of the field of Italian publishing in France and its implications in terms of publications, we will draw the décor of the action: in order to reflect upon the mechanisms of publication of Italian literature, we need to think the French publishing world as a potentially unified space. We will discuss its possible definition as a scene and a market, to the extent that these two notions illustrate the imbalance between the symbolical and the economic poles of the publishing world. The issue at stake is that of the definition of this world by its members themselves, especially as regards Italian literature.

### Chapter 3: Italian literature on the French scene

We have looked at Italy's images in France nowadays as they are presented by the actors in the publication of Italian literature in France. In the following chapters, we will analyse the interviews conducted with some of these actors; part of the conclusions of the work will have to do with the functioning of the publishing world. Therefore, as a necessary premise, we will now look at possible characterizations of this world, especially through the way the people who belong to it interact. It is constituted by very different people (publishers, heads of collections, translators, academics), and at the border of two different worlds: the publishing world (not only for Italian literature), and the Italian specialists (who do not always deal with publications).<sup>1</sup> This means that there are different degrees of knowledge (of Italian literature, language and culture for the specialists; of the functioning of a publishing house for the former) and different issues at stake in the editorial decisions. But this is not specific to Italian literature (for any foreign literature there is a world of specialists that overlaps with the publishing world), and thus addresses the question of the position of translated literature in the publishing world. In fact, by definition most publishers (at least in the familial structures) are somehow the specialists of French literature – no linguistic competency is required, and there is thus no clearly constituted specialised world outside the publishing world.

Therefore, if we envisage the publications of Italian literature as the result of a collective project, or at least action, then we may wonder what this "collective" refers to. We argue that it is the result of the work of several people who belong to the same field, in the bourdieusian sense of the term. But we can also envisage this world as a market, to the extent that one of the main outcomes is the commercialisation of books – if not the main one, but this is precisely what we want to look at. These two definitions do not necessarily exclude each other, though, especially as they both carry the idea of an (uneven) economic relation. However, the notion of field goes beyond this idea of economic domination, for instance it also contains the notion of interaction between its members. In this chapter, we will refer to it as the French scene, which carries a double signification: on the one hand, it designates the place of the action. In this regard, we will look at indigenous representations of the scene, with their own characteristics and in relation to foreign literature in general, Italian literature in particular, and also to the Italian scene. On the other hand, in direct reference to the interactionists' work, especially Goffman's *Presentation of Self*

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, these worlds strongly overlap: for instance, the heads of the collections of Italian literature are usually Italian specialists (translators, academics).

in *Everyday life* (Goffman, 1959), the scene is the place where the actors perform.<sup>1</sup> To this end, we will present an ethnographic analysis of the Paris book fair that took place in 2002 with Italy as guest of honour, that will stand as an illustration of the functioning of the field of publishing of Italian literature in France as a theatre scene.

## 1. THE FIELD OF PUBLISHING BETWEEN LITERARY SCENE AND BOOK MARKET

In the presentation of the theoretical framework, we ultimately envisage the French publishing world as a field, in the sense of Bourdieu. The notion of a field includes several dimensions: the publishing world is as a literary scene, but also as a book market. Here, we shall look at the publishing world as a scene as we are interested in the interaction between the actors. However, we will first show how the market aspect has become increasingly relevant in the definition of the French publishing field. Through an analysis of its attitude towards foreign literature, we will be able to consider its literary dimension. Finally, we will put the French scene in perspective by looking at its approach to the Italian publishing world.

### 1.1. The French book market

Firstly, the importance of Paris on the world literary scene should be remembered, as analysed in chapter 1. This key position implies that the developments of the French scene are quite likely to be reflected on a global level and therefore, this question merits further investigation.

"J'ai l'impression que, si Paris n'est plus une grande capitale culturelle, du point de vue de la production littéraire, elle est quand même encore un scène importante... Il y a peut-être, aussi, de grands écrivains, il y en a quand même quelques uns pour lesquels j'ai beaucoup d'estime. (...). Mais je crois que la France continue, à travers Paris, à être une plaque tournante. Parce que des auteurs édités en français ont pu être traduits dans les pays nordiques, par exemple, parce que ils ont été repérés en traduction en France avant d'être traduits dans les pays nordiques. C'est toujours... Paris est toujours un lieu d'échange, et je crois que, en tout cas, dans les jeunes générations... on peut lire tout aussi bien un roman africain, pakistanais, qu'italien... ou islandais, etc. Même si les pays qui bénéficient de la langue dominante, qui s'expriment dans la langue dominante, qui est l'anglais, sont bien sûr avantagés par rapport aux autres." (Paul Matonti)

It is likely that this idea of the centrality of the Parisian literary scene is often present in the publishers' mind, especially when they describe the functioning and characteristics of the French scene. It is firstly necessary to consider the state of the French book market today. The change

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<sup>1</sup> The French translation of the title of Goffman's book, *La mise en scène de la vie quotidienne*, provides an even more direct reference to the metaphor of a theatre play.



from a literary scene to a book market is not obvious, but the latter is definitely increasingly part of the former; in fact, the economic dimension of the publishing world seems to be becoming more relevant in order to understand how it functions. There have always been economic constraints (a publishing house is a firm), however, the advent of the book as a commercial product to the detriment of some literary principles seems to be a rather recent phenomenon, as we aim to show throughout this dissertation. In the introduction of *Où va le livre?*, Mollier notes that the movements of financial concentration of the publishing houses keeps on menacing the independent publishers (Mollier, 2002). More radically, Schiffrin has shown that in the United States, the revolution of the publishing world has led to the quasi-disappearance of the book conceived as intellectual creation (Schiffrin, 1999). In this context, looking at the strength of the book market is a way of emphasizing the importance of understanding the progressive dominance of the economic pole on the symbolical one.

*"D'une manière plus générale, quel est l'état du marché du livre aujourd'hui en France?"*

Bon, il est plutôt satisfaisant, oui, il y a une progression au cours de l'année suivante qu'on estime à environ 6%... Je parle de l'année précédente. Et donc il y a eu un printemps qui a été un peu faible, donc on ne peut pas s'avancer sur l'année en cours, il y a eu peut-être une régression par rapport à l'année précédente, qui était bonne."

(Anna Moresco)

*"Est-ce que vous pourriez me parler globalement du marché de l'édition en France? Est-ce qu'il est en bonne santé?"*

Depuis deux ans, ça allait très très bien, il y avait une embellie. Malheureusement, cette année, nous sommes en année électorale. Et les années électorales, c'est dramatique pour le livre. Les gens achètent des magazines, on vend pas de littérature, c'est pas terrible. Bon, vous avez les gros bouquins, les trucs genre Mary Higgins Clark qui, imperturbablement, se vendent... vous avez les thrillers, Stephen King, ça ça marche..." (Marianne Grange)

"Bon, il y a quand même, d'après le peu que je sais, un accroissement systématique et régulier de la production générale, donc à partir de là tous les différents secteurs se développent. Et puis aussi, comme il y avait un gros vide, au bout d'un moment quand il y a du vide ça fait un appel d'air et je crois qu'il y eu tout simplement ce phénomène, puisqu'on était arrivé à un extrême." (Danièle Perrineau)

The first two interviewees agree on the fact that the market's strength has recently improved. Danièle Perrineau completes this affirmation by reminding us that the previous period has been less poor, and thus that it can only get better. It is then important to understand which part of the market is doing well, and whether the situation is more difficult for small publishing houses, for instance. According to Marianne Grange, it seems that commercial literature is always successful – at least relatively –, and we can thus assume that the variations are more relevant for smaller publishers.

"Je crois que l'édition est un secteur avec une grande rotation... le travail de découverte se fait essentiellement dans des collections particulières des grandes maisons, ou bien par des francs-tireurs. Et le nombre des francs-tireurs, il n'a pas baissé. Depuis 20 ans, je peux vous assurer qu'il y en a même de plus en plus. Alors, il y a une mortalité énorme, un turn-over

absolument hallucinant. Mais il y a toujours une offre renouvelée et innovante. Alors, après, c'est racheté... par les grandes. C'est ça qui tue les maisons." (Marianne Grange)

It appears that it is not simply of market variations for the small publishers, but that there is also the risk of being absorbed by bigger publishers and going bankrupt.<sup>1</sup> This is part of a global phenomenon (at least, in the Western world), which is manifested in various ways, for instance in an overall acceleration of the rhythms.

"Ce qui était vrai de Gallimard qui avait vendu 237 exemplaires d'*Alcool* d'Apollinaire ne semble plus vrai aujourd'hui. J'ai l'impression que la notion de catalogue a disparu, comme la notion de fonds, d'ailleurs. En librairie, vous êtes trop jeune pour ça, mais il y a une quinzaine d'années, on trouvait encore la production de l'année. Aujourd'hui, on trouve la production des trois derniers mois. C'est également le cas de la Hune, finalement. Si vous allez dans les rayonnages de littérature italienne, de littérature russe, etc., il y a très peu de choses qui suragent de l'année en cours." (Paul Matonti)

The first aspect of this acceleration can be seen in the way in which the bookshops' stocks are supplied. The books are available less and less time, which in a way means that they become obsolete at a faster rate. The idea of seasons, for instance, is relatively recent. Until the 1990s, the *rentrée littéraire* was the big yearly event; nowadays, there is a Christmas selection and a summer one. Evidence for this can be found in the multiplication of the special issues of the specialised magazines (in France, mainly *Magazine Littéraire* and *Lire*).

"Tout ça c'est un contexte général qui est celui, d'une part, de l'édition, mais aussi, de manière plus générale, celui de notre culture et de notre rapport à la culture et à sa circulation qui fait que les choses sont très difficiles à articuler et qu'un écrivain... ou un amateur de livres, qui est un directeur de collection, qui peut être les deux, d'ailleurs... il se trouve dans des situations nouvelles et il doit faire avec. Avant, on pouvait prendre son temps, travailler à son rythme. C'est une attitude par rapport à la chose éditoriale qui n'a plus cours." (Jacques Laplace)

Jacques Laplace emphasizes another dimension of the acceleration, that relates directly to the work of the publishers. They are currently obliged to follow the market's rhythm (including the multiplication of the key moments during the year). It is implicit from this statement that there are negative consequences for the publishers, who have less freedom than before. Particularly, they are forced to working more quickly than they used to, and this can produce an effect of saturation.

"Diciamo che... perché il mercato francese è un mercato ipersaturato di suo, senza tradurre nessuno. Cioè, la rentrée settembre scorso, 325 romanzi, mi dica quanti di questi sono realmente venduti e letti? I librai parigini, lasciamo stare la provincia, è ancora peggio, ma i librai che si vedono arrivare 325 titoli in un mese... cioè 10 al giorno... che cosa vuol che facciano? Resa, prendono ma con il meccanismo della resa. Io te ne prendo 10 copie, ne vendo 2, gli altri 8 te li riprendi tu... io te li ho esposti, non comprati... e poi, su questi 325, se

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<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is clearly illustrated in the recent publications on the French book market, especially in the first part of *Où va le livre?*, which is called "L'économie du livre" (Mollier 2002). See also *L'édition sous influence* (Brémond 2002).

siamo generosi, ce ne saranno 30, il 10%, che alla fine dell'anno ancora si vendono."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

Indeed, there is an overall acceleration of work that leads to a multiplication of publications, both French or translated books. Carlo Baldini denounces the fact that this multiplication leads to a reduction in the quality of the books. The public cannot absorb a greater quantity, and it has a huge selection to choose from. Implicitly, this interviewee, along with many others laments the commercialisation of the publishing world, which is becoming the same as any other industry. *"La concentration et la mondialisation de l'édition transforment le livre, objet essentiellement culturel, en marchandise ordinaire, obéissant aux mêmes règles de production et de commercialisation que les produits industriels"* (Brémond 2002: 31). There is a phenomenon of the de-literarisation of books, that are increasingly considered as simply another consumption good, to the detriment of their literary, intellectual and cultural characteristics. However, if most interviewees endorse this view of the situation, not all of them share the idea that it is necessarily negative in the long run.

*"Moi j'ai l'impression que depuis 20 ans on traduit plus de romans italiens... disons que c'est comme si les mailles du filet étaient plus larges..."*

Où, vous avez parfaitement raison, vous avez très bien photographié la situation, mais faut-il s'en plaindre ? Faut-il se plaindre du fait qu'on traduise des best-sellers américains ? pourquoi pas italiens ? Non, je crois que même des best-sellers italiens, ou d'autres pays, ont malgré tout leur place, parce que le marché se mondialise, et c'est une problématique de marché. Mais même à travers les mailles du filet... disons, d'une littérature plus populaire, il peut y avoir quelque chose qui ne soit pas de ce monde de l'uniformisation de la mondialisation et de l'uniformisation des modes de pensée, et que par conséquent quelque chose qui soit particulier passe à travers les mailles du filet..." (Paul Matonti)

Paul Matonti's idea is that if more books are published, it will allow for the publication of an excellent book which might not have been previously selected by the publishers. In his opinion, there is an evolution towards a popularisation of literature rather than a strict commercialisation. This clearly illustrates the tension between commercial and symbolic literature that we have presented in the theoretical chapter: the change to a logic of market only leaves a small space for symbolic literature. At the same time, the 'symbolic quest', or their desire to publish high quality literature and to contribute to the building of the literary heritage of the nation is being crushed by the gradual disappearance of small publishers due to a lack of economic capital. Furthermore, their attempts to ensure their economic survival often compromises their symbolic integrity in the quest for a best-seller.

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<sup>1</sup> "Let's say that... because the French market is in itself hyper saturated, without translating anyone. That is to say, last September, 325 novels, tell me how many are really sold and read? The Parisian booksellers, let's not even speak about the province, it is even worse, but the booksellers who see 325 titles arrive in a month... that means 10 a day... what do you want them to do? They send back. They take, but with the mechanism of sending back... I take 10 copies, I sell 2, you take the other 8 back... they expose the books, they don't buy them. And then, out of these 325, if we are generous, there will be 30, 10%, that will still be on sale at the end of the year."

However, the situation is not as schematic as the above presentation might suggest. Evidence for this can be found in the survival of a number of small publishing houses who still give priority to the symbolic value of their texts. Following this, we will now consider the attitude of those in the field towards literature; this means that we will move to analyse another dimension of the publishing world which is, in some respects, more literary.

## 1.2. Foreign literature on the French scene

Translated books generate specific costs for publishers, insofar as they have to buy the rights and pay the translator.<sup>1</sup> There are two ways of understanding the consequences of these costs for the market. Following the views of Jurt, it can be argued that a translated book represents a higher risk as it is a more expensive product (Jurt, 1999); or conversely we could argue that a translated book has already passed the selection of the publishers in its own country, and therefore, that it is less risky to publish it, as it is more likely to be successful in the target country as well: *"les coûts sont très inférieurs à ceux qu'aurait entraîné la constitution d'un catalogue à peu près équivalent en notoriété sur des auteurs français; et cela pour des risques moins grands (malgré les aléas liés aux décalages entre les traditions nationales), du fait que, quand un livre vient en négociation pour la traduction, c'est qu'il a déjà connu un certain succès dans son pays"* (Bourdieu 1999).

### *Openness or chauvinism?*

Apart from the issue of the cost of translated literature, this section aims to understand the "state of mind" of the French scene with regard to foreign literature. In particular, although the number of translations has recently increased, is this necessarily related to an increasing openness?

"Dans des statistiques que j'ai fait pour une conférence sur les 100 meilleures ventes de 2001, en littérature, il y avait... c'était les 100 meilleures ventes en France en littérature, mélange français et étranger... Il y avait... quatre anglo-saxons dans les 50 premiers, c'est pas beaucoup! Les français lisent beaucoup leur littérature. Il y avait Umberto Eco, à l'ancienneté... Il y avait deux... chinois, "Balzac et la petite tailleuse...", et Gao, le prix Nobel. Il y avait deux latino-américains... pas d'allemand, et je pense qu'il y avait qu'Umberto Eco, comme italien.

*Tout le reste était français?*

Oui. C'est quand même très intéressant, très intéressant. Parce qu'on pense que la littérature étrangère... c'est pas vrai du tout."

(Marianne Grange)

As far as best-sellers are concerned, it appears that the French are not as open as it seems. According to the statistics that Marianne Grange refers to, out of the top one hundred books

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 4 for further discussion of this question.

sold in 2001, it does not appear that there were many translations,<sup>1</sup> which moderates the role and importance of foreign literature.

*"Comment vous expliquez que ça a été délaissé?"*

Je crois que ça devait être aussi toute la littérature. On traduisait pas beaucoup en France d'une façon générale, à part peut-être la littérature anglaise, comme toujours. Mais je pense pas qu'on traduisait tant que ça. Par rapport à d'autres pays on traduit moins, c'est sûr. Par rapport à l'Italie, c'est sûr, sans doute aussi l'Allemagne. On est assez chauvins, nous français.

*Mais quand même on traduit plus...*

Peut-être qu'on s'est un peu ouverts sur l'extérieur... Mais en France on n'a pas les études de littérature comparée, comme on fait en Italie, je crois que l'enseignement est quand même plus ouvert sur les littératures étrangères. Je sais pas si c'était plus ouvert à votre époque, enfin nous on nous apprenait pas, on n'étudiait pas la littérature étrangère... bon, si on choisissait l'Italien, on faisait aussi la littérature, ce qu'on fait plus maintenant, d'ailleurs... c'est dommage. Je sais pas, je crois que les autres pays sont plus ouverts que nous."

(Delphine Vasseur)

This reference to French chauvinism is often evoked by foreigners (see chapter 2). The fact that the French tend to denigrate what comes from abroad, or at least, to not show a great interest, could be related to the centrality of the French scene in the world system: it has also become central because of the strength of French literary production. However, in this passage, there is an emphasis on the fact that things could be changing slowly and that there is a growing openness as regards literature.

*"Même si je crois que c'est moins vrai [que les pays qui s'expriment en anglais sont avantagés par rapport aux autres], parce qu'on édite des romans policiers italiens, toute sorte de livres de toutes sortes de qualités, de toute la gamme éditoriale, du livre pratique à la philosophie, donc il y a une ouverture très grande. Agamben ne vend pas, mais il est édité assez largement, bon." (Paul Matonti)*

Here we see that the centrality of Paris could also be interpreted as a factor of openness, to the extent that it is a vibrant place: books are translated into French, and published, which is, in itself, a sign of openness.

"Je crois que globalement il y a un plus grand intérêt, et je crois qu'on ne peut que s'en louer, vers les littératures étrangères. En tenant compte du fait qu'il y a, comme ça s'est toujours passé en France, des phénomènes... il y a des phénomènes ondulatoires, des phénomènes de vagues, c'est une sinusoïde. Il y a des moments où ce sont les américains du nord, ça a été le cas après la Libération de 1944-1945, on ne voulait lire que des anglo-américains, surtout des américains. Il y a eu un moment où c'était les américains du sud, c'était plus tard. Puis les japonais, puis ça change. Il y a eu la littérature russe, puis les allemands, récemment, etc. Donc, il y a des phénomènes de ce genre qui sont récurrents, mais je crois que globalement la curiosité vers la littérature étrangère est en progrès, et encore une fois ça me semble une donnée positive. Alors, là-dessus, je sais pas moi, des phénomènes comme les opérations dites "belles étrangères", qui ont été un peu impulsées par le CNL, par exemple... Je sais pas moi, mais le fait par exemple de mettre l'accent chaque année au Salon du Livre sur un pays qui est invité d'honneur, cette année étant l'Italie, l'an dernier l'Allemagne. Tout ça contribue à donner régulièrement des coups de projecteurs qui me semblent aller dans le sens d'une

<sup>1</sup> When I asked her which statistics she was referring to more precisely, she mentioned a special issue of *Livres Hebdo*, however, she was unable to provide the exact reference.

curiosité plus grande. Et puis je crois que les éditeurs sont globalement plus ouverts en direction des littératures étrangères aussi, ça ça ne fait aucun doute." (Marco Guglielmi)

Marco Guglielmi confirms the idea of an interest of the French market and the French public in foreign literature. Whereas most interviewees insist on the fact that this openness is mainly evident with regard to Anglo-Saxon literature (see next section), he interprets it as part of a cyclical process, which is similar to the one pertaining to Italian literature that was brought into light in the previous chapter. He also shows how the literary institutions in France participate in the creation of the foreign trends. This idea of cycles is also described by Jean-Philippe Bianchi:

*"Et qu'est-ce qui fait que des gens comme Manganelli ou Verga ont trouvé une place en France dans les années 1990? Pourquoi maintenant et pas il y a 20 ans?"*

Alors, moi je pense qu'il y a des cycles. C'est-à-dire que, il y a plusieurs choses. Du point de vue éditorial, il y a des moments où vous avez des choses qui ont été laissées en friche, qu'on n'a pas vraiment exploré assidûment. Et puis tout à coup, progressivement mais à un rythme soutenu, on se rend compte qu'il y a une espèce de vivier. C'est comme quelqu'un qui ferait de la pêche au chalut, quoi. Il se dirait, là, il y a une zone, il y a quand même des choses, donc on va essayer de les cerner. Et puis il y a un moment où le banc de poissons finit par s'épuiser, on sent qu'il y a une autre zone où ça va s'amorcer. Nous avons eu un moment, c'était la littérature latino-américaine. Et c'est vrai qu'il y a toujours un livre emblématique de ça. Pour la littérature latino-américaine, c'était *Cent ans de solitude*, de Gabriel Garcia Marquez, pour les italiens le *Nom de la rose*, mais je pense pas que ce soit un livre qui déclenche. Je pense qu'un livre va pouvoir servir un peu de balise, de phare."

(Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

This representation of the situation brings a strong nuance to the wide-spread idea that French openness has to do with the so-called cultural globalisation. In fact, the underlying representation is that of the French market being progressively invaded by Anglo-Saxon cultural goods:

*"Vous pensez que la France manque d'ouverture?"*

Oui, toujours un petit peu. Moi, en tant qu'éditeur, je suis un peu énervé par l'anglo-américanophilie littéraire. Je la trouve à la longue casse-pieds... la dépendance vis-à-vis de l'édition, de la presse anglo-américaine, qui sont relativement bons... à la longue ça m'énervé un peu.

*Mais c'est pas uniquement la littérature, ça...*

Non, pas uniquement. Ça touche la télé, le cinéma, etc."

(Jérôme Dupuy)

This position is balanced by Marco Guglielmi and Jean-Philippe Bianchi's idea that there are cycles that also pertain to the publishing world. A successful book, or a book fair, or any cultural event that generates the public's curiosity can mark the beginning of a new cycle. This is another way of understanding openness. Consequently, it appears that the increasing openness of the French, on the one hand, can be related to the processes of cultural globalisation, and on the other hand, it has roots in the succession of cultural events that take place at the French level and enhance curiosity.

### *Does Anglo-Saxon literature dominate the French market?*

The increasing openness of the French market is not in contradiction with the spreading of Anglo-Saxon literature, quite the opposite. For some interviewees, it seems difficult to associate openness and "consumption" of American literature:

"En littérature, les français ont eu les yeux braqués sur les Etats-Unis pendant des années et des années, et c'est encore le cas. C'est très difficile de les faire revenir vers... il y a des gens qui ne lisent que de la littérature américaine, qui en bâfrent, il n'y a que ça... c'est terrible, la littérature américaine... et qui jamais n'iront acheter un roman italien ou espagnol. Bon, mais si on arrive progressivement, si cette augmentation dans le domaine des traductions... si l'Europe se retrouve et qu'il y a plus de curiosité de la part des français, des hollandais et des portugais, et vice et versa etc., ça serait formidable, moi je serais ravi." (Jérôme Dupuy)

Jérôme Dupuy clearly uses pejorative words to qualify the dominance of American literature. In reality, this statement not only refers to literary life, it also claims to highlight the existence of a different functioning of the international cultural industry which is widespread in France and in Europe.<sup>1</sup> The French scene is perceived here as being invaded by American culture. However, other interviewees offer a more nuanced perspective.

"Bon, il faut pas exagérer, il y a des auteurs qui fonctionnent, en littérature italienne. Mais de manière générale elle se vend beaucoup moins que la littérature anglo-saxonne, c'est ça. Parce que, même ici, les plus grandes ventes, ce sont des auteurs anglais, ou américains. C'est John Le Carré, c'est... Irving, ça ça marche très bien, alors qu'il n'y a pas l'équivalent en Italie, ni en Allemand. En espagnol on commence à avoir du succès, mais ça n'a rien à voir. Parce que même Javier Marias, qui est, disons, une figure un peu l'équivalent de Elisabetta Rasi, c'est-à-dire des écrivains un peu intellectuels, ça fonctionne beaucoup mieux. Et puis il y a des auteurs à succès en Espagne, Arturo Pérez Reverte, Molina... je veux dire, tout ça ça fonctionne." (Paul Darlignac)

This passage focuses on the fact American best-sellers fulfil the expectation of a large readership, the equivalent of which is not found in the literature of other countries. We could examine whether this type of production is specifically American or if it exists in other countries without the same visibility.

"Bon, Ammaniti, je pense que s'il s'était appelé Tom Wolf il aurait vendu 100 000, 150 000, 200 000 exemplaires, aussi bien pour le premier, *Je t'emmène*, que pour *Je n'ai pas peur*. Je trouve qu'il y a une affection des français à la littérature anglo-saxonne... On ne voit pas qu'en Europe on a des auteurs au moins aussi bons, ils sont pas visibles, pas pareils, c'est tout." (Myreille Jacob)

Myreille Jacob defends the idea that the success of American literature not only relates to quality (in other words, the ability to satisfy the public's expectations), but also to a perverse functioning of reputation. The French public appears to be fascinated by American literature which is perceived as specifically American, and there is, thus, no space for a European equivalent (which, by definition, is not American). European thrillers, for instance, are often perceived as pale copies

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence can be found in the rise of the alter-mondialist movements, whose position on culture advocates a greater space for "minoritarian" culture to the detriment of big American productions.

of American thrillers (like John Le Carré or Michael Connelly), and are of little interest for the French public. However, this fascination is not too widespread, and part of the editorial world has been trying to fight against it.

"Je pense aussi que la littérature étrangère a essayé de se renouveler. On en avait marre d'être autant soumis aux succès américains. Je pense que... oui! Et comme ça a coïncidé avec le moment où sont arrivés sur le "marché", disons, des traducteurs, des gens doués, disons, effectivement, qui connaissaient bien la langue italienne et tout, tout ça a fait que ces livres... mais ils n'étaient pas reliés... euh, relayés. Ils n'étaient pas relayés assez. C'est-à-dire que vous aviez des traducteurs enthousiastes qui traduisaient, et puis le livre tombait à plat parce qu'il n'était pas dans un climat culturel suffisamment préparé. ." (Paul Darlignac)

It is clear from this analysis that the relationship between the French scene and American literature is indeed ambiguous. On the one hand, the publishing world holds the underlying view that American best-sellers are part of a widespread commercial literature, however, they do not deserve any symbolic success. On the other hand, the French market gives a lot of space to American literature, which seems to fulfil the expectations of an increasingly large public, and the publishing world should therefore adapt to this need.<sup>1</sup> This double view illustrates the tension between the two dimensions of the publishing industry in France, both symbolic and commercial, with the latter increasingly taking up more of the space previously occupied by the former. From our perspective, it is important to keep this context in mind in order to understand the way that the French scene relates both to Italian literature and to the Italian scene.

### 1.3. The French scene and the Italian scene

#### *Good working relations...*

We have dealt with the images of Italian literature and showed how they were related to a somehow romanticized image of Italy, however, we have not yet considered the representations of the Italian publishing world. In order to explore this further, one question which was asked to many interviewees concerned the nature of their working relations with Italians.

"Il y a plusieurs phénomènes qui jouent de façon simultanée et quelques fois concurrentes. Il y a les relations directes d'éditeur à éditeur entre pays. C'est-à-dire que Monsieur Feltrinelli, ou "chi per lui", comme on dit en italien, informe Monsieur Gallimard que dans la production à venir pour l'année suivante il y a un certain nombre de bouquins sur lesquels il fonde des espoirs sérieux. Et éventuellement on envoie des bonnes feuilles, un manuscrit, même avant traduction, etc. Ça fait partie des relations directes entre maisons d'édition." (Marco Guglielmi)

"Les maisons d'édition italiennes ? Oui, quand il y a des contrats, ça se passe très bien, avec les italiens." (Monique Desmortiers)

<sup>1</sup> Even though we can understand these expectations as created by the situation. "Le discours dominant affirme que la concentration de l'édition ne porte pas atteinte à la diversité et à la qualité des livres, que le consommateur est roi car, par ses choix, il oriente la production des livres. La réalité est fondamentalement différente." (Brémond, 2002: 9).



*"Vous avez des contacts avec des éditeurs italiens?"*

Oui, bien sûr.

*Comment ça se passe?*

Ecoutez, c'est Francfort qui est le lieu de rencontre, la plupart du temps. On connaît, bon, Feltrinelli, Einaudi, euh... Giunti... Bon, on en connaît beaucoup. Il y a des ventes de droits qui se font directement. Nous on vend les droits des auteurs français, on a vendu à plusieurs éditeurs. Il y a de tout petits éditeurs dans le sud. Donc, c'est des relations très suivies, nous avons les responsables des droits ici qui envoient nos programmes sous enveloppe ou par mail à ces éditeurs, ils nous envoient les leurs, on échange les impressions, voilà. On s'aime bien."

(Jérôme Dupuy)

The first passage presents the ideal way in which relationships between publishers should be. This means that there are direct links between publishing houses, similar to any professional environment, however, these relations are not bound to personal friendly relations. Conversely, in the third piece, we find this emotional dimension that characterises the representations of Italy in France: Jérôme Dupuy describes work relations, and concludes by saying that they like each other, thus going outside the framework of strict professionalism. This can also be understood as part of the way in which the publishing world works, which is largely based on the mobilisation of personal networks, and thus gives a significant role to personal (emotional) relations.

"Donc, j'ai cherché l'éditeur pour lui acheter les droits, et je suis tombée sur quelqu'un qui m'a dit, "madame, il n'est pas question que je vous vende ce livre si vous ne connaissez pas la Sicile". Donc j'ai dit, très bien, on était à l'automne, très bien, je viens pour Noël. Donc je suis allée en Sicile à Noël. Et là, ça a été la surprise absolue, il y avait la presse à l'arrivée de l'avion... j'étais un peu interloquée. Le lendemain il y avait *Il Giornale di Sicilia* avec "Editora francese di Natoli", première page, "è arrivata di Parigi con il marito". Bon, c'était quand même assez extravagant. Après, ce confrère nous a traités formidablement bien. Il nous a pris en charge et il nous a fait visiter la ville de Palerme, pour nous montrer où se passait ce roman." (Marianne Grange)

In this extract, work relations are presented as magical or mythic, similar to the way some publishers described their discovery of certain Italian novels. The romanticized representation of Italy is also linked to the relations with the Italian publishing world. It seems to be familiar as it is quite similar to the French publishing world.

"Mais avec l'Italie, le travail est vraiment très facile, parce que, d'abord, on se connaît bien entre éditeurs français et italiens, et pas seulement depuis le Salon du livre. Enfin, c'est... souvent... bon, moi je parle italien, et la plupart du temps on parle français, parce que la plupart des éditeurs italiens parlent très bien français. Ils font partie, justement, de cette bourgeoisie italienne pour qui l'apprentissage du français est un critère important, et souvent on parle en français." (Jean Dupasquier)

Jean Dupasquier explains that his good relations with his Italian peers is based on a certain proximity, a common language and the habit of working together. It should also be questioned, however, whether this proximity is also based on similar ways of working, or if there are major structural differences between the French and the Italian publishing worlds.

*... or insurmountable differences?*

"D'abord, les maisons d'édition ici sont pas constituées comme les nôtres. Les grandes. Même les grands groupes français sont des groupes éditoriaux, sauf exception. Alors qu'en Italie, ils sont aussi des groupes de presse. Donc, ça c'est une différence fondamentale. En plus, maintenant l'édition italienne est constituée de manière à avoir non seulement la presse, quelques maisons d'édition, et autour une constellation de petites maisons d'édition spécialisées, catalogue art, technique... Ça existe aussi en France, mais en France c'est très rare, localisé à deux grands groupes. Alors qu'en Italie c'est la tendance générale. Euh... il y a aussi l'Italie se projetant en France, maintenant, c'est quand même la nouveauté... Electa, c'est bien que ce soit Electa, mais enfin... Electa a pris un bout de Gallimard, la Rizzoli a racheté Flammarion, moi c'est un de mes éditeurs, donc je vois bien se qui se passe. Rizzoli rachète un gros bout de Flammarion, qui s'était restructuré deux ans avant, qui avait assaini tout ça... et maintenant ils ne savent pas bien quoi en faire! C'est extraordinaire, c'est une situation folle. Ils ont aussi acheté des journaux, France soir... On comprend pas très bien ce qui se passe, ce rapport entre la France et l'Italie sur le plan éditorial. Mais c'est vrai que l'édition italienne est extrêmement offensive, et donc est en train non seulement de se reconstruire, mais aussi de faire des choses à l'étranger, dont la France, justement la France. Donc, l'un peut-être est lié à l'autre, aussi. Je dis pas que Gallimard publie plus de livres italiens pour autant. Il traduit que les livres Electa, ils sont contraints et forcés de le faire... Visiblement ça fait partie des accords, c'est une condition sine qua non, un nombre d'Electa... Bon, mais ça touche pas à la politique éditoriale, comme ça touche pas chez Flammarion, vraiment à rien." (Jacques Laplace)

In Italy, the groups which control the book industry are more diversified than in France. One consequence of this structural difference between the two publishing worlds is that the Italian groups are more competitive, economically speaking, and behave just like any financial group. In France, this is true only to a certain extent. The idea underlying Jacques Laplace's statement is that strong editorial spirit continues to exist in France, even though the publisher is confined by both economic and literary constraints. In contrast, he implies that the Italian publishing world is less concerned with the symbolic value of book production. This is illustrated by the use of the agents in the two countries:

*"Vous qui travaillez beaucoup avec les éditeurs italiens, quelles différences de fonctionnement vous voyez entre les mondes de l'édition français et italien?"*

Bon, alors, je vous ai fait une petite allusion au rôle des agents d'auteurs. Bon, en Italie il y a quand même beaucoup plus d'agents qu'en France. Nous, d'auteurs français, on en a quasiment pas représentés par des agents. Alors qu'en Italie il y en a, bon, 40, je sais pas.

*Et ça correspond à quoi?"*

En France, il est l'usage de confier ses droits à son éditeur. On dit bon, mon éditeur a un bon service des droits, une ou plusieurs personnes qui font la prospection et la promotion de mon livre à l'étranger, qui vont signer des contrats pour moi. En Italie, à peu près un tiers des auteurs, peut-être plus, confient ce rôle, ces tâches, à un agent, plutôt. Euh... on dit que le fait que les auteurs italiens aient confié plus leurs droits à des agents correspond à la mauvaise gestion des droits pas les éditeurs italiens. Alors, est-ce que les éditeurs italiens ont triché, plus que nous? Il y a une question de transparence des comptes. Les grandes maisons françaises ont fait beaucoup d'efforts depuis dix ou quinze ans, ça n'a pas toujours été le cas... et cet effort est très conscient. C'est-à-dire qu'on n'a pas envie que la situation espagnole ou américaine, où tout le monde est représenté par des agents, s'installe..."

(Jean Dupasquier)

According to Jean Dupasquier, The increasingly systematic use of agents is symptomatic of a certain lack of trust between Italian writers and their publishers. Another illustration of these structural differences is the use of collections:

"Le problème de l'Italie, c'est que moi je vois plus très bien ce qui se passe, parce que les maisons... beaucoup de maisons d'édition qui étaient des références pour moi ont fait faillite, ont disparu... beaucoup de choses disparaissent, les grandes collections d'Einaudi ont fondu comme neige au soleil. Chez Feltrinelli ils reconstruisent des collections sur des critères complètement différents. (...) C'est-à-dire que maintenant il y a des cases, il faut rentrer dans les cases. Voilà. Donc, on voit bien que tout se refait, on va vers un nouveau type d'édition. Et c'est pour ça, je vous dis, que les personnages... En Italie il y aura de moins en moins de responsables d'édition. Je parle pas dans le cadre universitaire, je parle de l'édition normale. Il y aura de plus en plus de gens qui sont responsables de secteurs... qui sont des responsables techniques." (Jacques Laplace)

The dissolution of the old collections and the creation of new ones with stricter borders confirms the image that the interviewees have of the Italian publishing world, which is less and less close to literature. This could be related to the lack of independence of the publishing world from the media (and we could add the academic world) as mentioned above. In fact, this idea is often evoked during the interviews.

"En Italie, il y a une polémique sur le monde de l'édition et sur les critères de choix des livres... Notamment, sur les liens très étroits entre le monde de l'édition, le monde de la presse et le monde universitaire, où on montre qu'ils sont très conservateurs, et ce sont les mêmes personnes qui ont leur groupe, leur clan, si vous voulez, en termes plus italiens, qui protègent leurs intérêts, qui sont toujours les mêmes. Donc, c'est un monde qui publie beaucoup de titres, mais où peut-être de bons manuscrits n'arrivent pas à être publiés. Parce que, on arrive à être publié quand on est déjà en contact avec quelqu'un du monde de l'édition... Soit on travaille pour une revue, soit pour un éditeur, soit on a un lien avec un universitaire, etc. D'ailleurs, les cas de Tiziano Scarpa, tous ces gens, sont très clairs, ils ont beaucoup de contacts. Donc, ils peuvent publier n'importe quoi, tout le monde parle d'eux, c'est clair. C'est un mécanisme... même pas très complexe, mais très clair, très pervers." (Sandra Di Maggio)

"Bon. Je vous parle de ça parce que, comme l'édition, très souvent... Il y a les mêmes personnes qui travaillent dans la presse, la critique et l'université, et donc évidemment il y a un dysfonctionnement profond. Donc, il y a des phénomènes construits de toutes pièces - les cannibales -, il y a des chapelles... Donc, maintenant, c'est à Rimini, les anciens du groupe 63, Ballestrini, etc., qui essayent de faire publier leurs protégés. Donc, tout ça a un fonctionnement très précis. De temps en temps il y a des écrivains qui arrivent à sortir." (Yves Tessarin)

This interaction between the media, the publishing and academic worlds is presented as a perverse aspect of the way in which the Italian system works. Implicitly, it is assimilated to the existence of powerful networks in that country – with obvious references to the Mafia – which is deeply rooted in the representations of Italy in France. The Italian publishing world is perceived as contaminated and perverse; the underlying representation is that of a world that does not take any real interest in literature, where the pursuit of profit has replaced the desire for literary discovery. This image is interesting from our perspective as by this saying the French publishers

strengthen the idea that themselves are still under the charm of the romanticised representation that exploded in the 1980s. Some of them clearly evoke this difference in the perception of literature.

"Je crois qu'en France il reste un amour pour la littérature qui n'est pas le même qu'en Italie, il reste des critiques un peu plus indépendants, malgré tout. Pas tous, mais il en reste. Il reste de petits éditeurs qui font ce travail de découverte tout le temps. C'est vrai, même ici les grands éditeurs ne le font plus. Ils ne font que racheter les jeunes auteurs découverts par les petits, un peu comme en Italie. Mais bon, en France on lit beaucoup plus, il y a beaucoup de marché, il y a des lecteurs beaucoup plus avisés. Bon, mon mari a publié un livre chez un tout petit éditeur, mais il y a eu une page entière... dans toute la presse, Libé, le Monde, Nouvel Obs, tout! Il y a eu 15 ou 20 papiers, alors que c'est un éditeur tout petit, inconnu. Il y a vraiment... c'est des choses inimaginables en Italie, sauf si c'est un phénomène sociologique, si par exemple c'est sur la drogue au moment où il y a... bon, voilà. Sauf ce type de phénomène-là, ça n'existe pas, en France, si. Et en France, il y a les revues qui font un travail de découverte, les revues littéraires, qui sont peut-être pas très connues du grand public, mais qui font ce premier travail de... il y a des cercles où on parle encore de littérature, où on l'aime. En Italie, pas vraiment, pas beaucoup." (Sandra Di Maggio)

"E' strano dirlo dal punto di vista di un ospite in un paese straniero, ma da questo punto di vista l'Italia è più sana... cioè, quando dico l'Italia, dico l'editoria italiana. L'editoria italiana esercita delle selezioni che l'editoria francese non esercita. Ma perché? Perché qui è questo problema, come dire, molto interessante dal punto di vista della sociologia della cultura... Questo è un paese ad alto tasso culturale... Vuol dire che questo è un paese in cui, in perfetta buona fede, un buon numero di persone, parlo di scrittori, ha la consapevolezza, spesso fondata, di saper scrivere un buon francese. Siamo da questo punto di vista agli antipodi della situazione italiana, in cui un italiano su 100 sa scrivere, non sto parlando di romanzi, sa scrivere un corretto italiano. (...) Qui, in Francia, la letteratura è una cosa che sta sotto pelle alla gente."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

It is easier to become a writer in France rather than in Italy: in this sense, literature is closer to the majority of people. This view, presented by Carlo Baldini, is reaffirmed by Sandra Di Maggio. These two interviewees are Italian, both living in France and working – more or less directly – in the publishing world. Off record, they both explained to me that they reached this conclusion as a result of their distance and the ability to compare. This makes it appear that the French publishers themselves could not really be aware of this love of literature. This is another feature of the centrality of the French scene.

"Sur le plan de la gestion et de l'administration de ces grosses structures, que sont devenues les maisons d'édition modernes, je crois que les modes de fonctionnement sont globalement analogues. (...) La grosse différence qu'il y a entre maisons d'édition françaises et italiennes, me semble-t-il, c'est le fait que géographiquement les italiens sont beaucoup plus dispersés... Mais ça s'explique par des raisons d'histoire nationale. Il y aurait pas en France à Lille, à...

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<sup>1</sup> "It is strange to say it for a guest in a foreign country, but from this point of view Italy is saner... that is to say, when I say Italy, I mean the Italian publishing world. The Italian publishing world makes selections that the French one does not make. But why? Because of this problem, how to say it, very interesting from the point of view of the sociology of culture... This is a country with a high cultural rate... It means that this is a country where, totally sincerely, a wide range of people, I am talking of writers, have the awareness, often legitimate, of their ability to write in correct French. From this point of view, we are at the antipodes of the Italian situation, where one Italian out of 100 knows how to write, I don't mean novels, I mean to write in correct Italian (...) Here, in France, literature is in people's blood."

Chambéry, à Bordeaux, à Montpellier... autant de maisons importantes qu'on peut en trouver à Venise, Turin, Bari, Palerme, Naples etc. en Italie. Ça, les choses sont différentes de ce point de vue-là."  
(Marco Guglielmi)

The notion of the centrality of France also highlights another issue, the importance of Paris in comparison with the rest of France. The hyper-centralisation of the publishing world (similar to everything else in France) is another structural difference between the two countries. However, in line with Marco Guglielmi, it should be questioned whether all the differences that were highlighted in the interviewees' discourses are so relevant, in other words whether such similarities exist between the two scenes.<sup>1</sup>

*Differences that might be relative, after all...*

"En revanche pour l'Italie, je peux pas dire que je connaisse de l'intérieur le fonctionnement de l'édition. Bon, si, pour Mondadori j'ai quelques... j'en sais assez sur comment fonctionne Mondadori pour vous dire que c'est pas très différent de comment ça fonctionne chez Vivendi, quoi. Euh... mais autrement j'ai pas l'impression qu'il y ait beaucoup de différences."  
(Sylvain Renucci)

"Moi, l'impression que j'ai, c'est que chacun trouve que l'autre est très efficace. Que chacun trouve que l'autre est glorieux... mais je crois que c'est vrai dans les deux sens, ils ont raison tous les deux! (...). Ça traîne, ça traîne, je crois que les trucs ont été faits, c'est toujours pas fait... mais c'est dans les deux sens, je dis "ah bon, vous avez toujours pas acheté les droits de cette nouvelle" "ah non, c'est eux"... Finalement, je crois qu'il y a une lourdeur bureaucratique des deux côtés." (Michel Lombard)

There are indeed structural similarities between France and Italy. These two passages provide quite a bureaucratic view of both systems, but they directly refer to the big publishing houses rather than to the small independent ones (it is explicit in the first abstract, in the second one he makes it clear further on). This evokes a sense of homogenisation, which is characteristic of the development of the multinational companies. However, the situation is not necessarily different with regard to smaller publishing houses.

"Non mi sembra che ci siano grandi differenze. Diciamo, sono tra le due industrie culturali più simili l'una l'altra. Certamente, c'è molto più differenze tra Italia e Germania, o Inghilterra. Hanno lo stesso fenomeno delle concentrazioni editoriali. Sono state tutte e due delle editrici, quelle che ho vissuto io, molto disorganizzate, ma anche coraggiose, diciamo audaci, e nel frattempo si sono razionalizzate... adesso i colpi di testa non li fa più nessuno, ne di qua ne di là, perché tanti ci hanno rimesso i miliardi, perché tanti hanno rischiato di fallire... vedi qua Christian Bourgois venduto in parte... mi sembra che tutto sia molto ordinato, che la parola budget trionfa... le motivazioni intellettuali sono... insomma, non ci

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<sup>1</sup> We can also wonder whether these differences are emphasized by the interviewees because I asked them if there were any. In fact, they might not have mentioned them if I had not asked. Which would not mean that there are no differences, but that they could not be as important as it seems. This is the feeling I had several times when they explained them to me. Rather, I sensed that despite these differences the similarities were striking, more than with any other country.

sono più quelle case editrici pletoriche in cui lavoravano due terzi delle persone in più. Ora, se sono sessanta persone, sono sessanta, prima si poteva lavorare in cento."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

According to Carlo Baldini, the notion of homogenisation also affects the smaller structures. He describes the progressive loss of editorial spirit that has occurred in both France and Italy, which is contrary to some of the interviewees' opinion that this dissolution only prevails in Italy. We thus need to move to a different level of analysis: it is not so important to understand whether the French or the Italian system has become more homogenised, or which has been taken over more by publishing houses that are part of financial groups (along with everything that it implies in terms of the perception of literature and the selection for publication). Instead, it is necessary to underline tension which is visible in most interviewees' discourse between commercial and symbolic aspect of their profession.

*"Et quand vous disiez qu'en France et en Italie il y a une perception identique du métier d'éditeur..."*

Oui, nous sommes cousins, quoi.

*Qu'est-ce que vous voulez dire, exactement, par "perception du métier d'éditeur"? Enfin... quelle est votre perception de votre métier, je dirais?*

Bon, il y a la façon de lire les textes, la façon de négocier, la façon de lancer un auteur, la façon de... comment dirais-je... une approche culturelle, générale si vous voulez, de la relation avec les auteurs..."

(Thierry Durel)

"Au point de vue professionnel... la façon de faire, les choix chez les éditeurs etc., l'ambiance générale n'est pas trop différente. Il y a beaucoup de ressemblances, de parallèles possibles entre l'édition française et l'édition italienne.

*Comme par exemple?*

Je veux dire, dans la façon de faire, dans la perception des choses, dans les choix, dans... euh... bon, je ne parle pas des structures, qui sont différentes, il y a des grands groupes, des maisons indépendantes... bon, je parle plus d'une question de... d'une façon de concevoir son métier d'éditeur, etc."

(Guido Pierucci)

The emphasis here is on the similarity of perception of the profession of publisher, that is to say a common approach to the authors and the texts, which relays the idea of cultural proximity between the two countries.

On the one hand, even though there are structural differences and similarities between the French and the Italian systems, cultural globalisation affects both of them the same way:

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<sup>1</sup> "I don't think there are big differences. We can say that they are among the two cultural industries that are closer to each other. There are certainly more differences between Italy and Germany, or England. They have the same phenomenon of editorial concentration. They have both been publishing industries, the ones I have experienced myself, very disorganised, but also courageous, even audacious, and in the meantime they have been rationalised... Now no one acts impulsively any more, neither here nor there, because so many have lost billions, so many have risked going bankrupt... look at Christian Bourgois, partly sold... It seems to me that everything is well-ordered, it is the triumph of the budget... intellectual motivations are... well, there are no more plethoric publishing houses were two thirds of the people used to work in addition. Now, if there are sixty people, they are sixty, before they could have been one hundred at work."

concentration of financial groups, commercialisation of the publications, progressive modification of the perception of the publishers' task, mainly due to the increasing rarity of publishers as they used to exist (namely independent from the media and the academia, and with real interest in literature). On the other hand, we have seen that in the definition of the French scene by its own actors when dealing with Italy, the tension between a mythic, romantic image and the dominance of the economic constraint is often perceptible. More generally, as far as foreign literature is concerned, there are recurrent references to the threat that American best-sellers represent on the French market (their success takes place to the detriment of other literatures); the interviewees thus often bring in – directly or not - the notion of economic logic (at different levels), with the underlying idea that it is increasingly relevant and interferes to the detriment of the symbolic pole. In other terms, the French scene's relation to foreign literature in general, and Italian literature in particular, testifies for a progressive switch from literary scene to book market.

As we saw, there are several ways of qualifying the ensemble formed by the actors involved in the publication of Italian literature in France. The definition as a scene focuses on the actors rather than the structures. Conversely, the term 'book market' emphasizes the economic constraint, and thus the existence of economic structures that orientate the book production. From a bourdieusian perspective, the notion of a field includes both dimensions. Throughout this work, this variety and complexity will be continuously highlighted, especially in the analysis of the indigenous representations of the actors. By looking at their discourse, we are placed *de facto* inside the field. Here, from an illustrative perspective, we will analyse a specific event, namely the Paris book fair in which Italy was the guest country. This event will be considered as a metaphor of the scene described above, a condensed version of a long term process. In order to do so, a radically different approach will be adopted insofar as the method used changes perspective: this part is mostly based on a work of observation conducted during the fair. The analysis is ethnographic, and aims to illustrate the presence of Italian literature on the French scene, both literally and symbolically. Finally, this explicitly symbolic level will put the definitions (and self-definitions) of the publishing world exposed above into perspective.

## 2. THE PARIS BOOK FAIR

The annual Paris Book Fair attracts a wide audience and the participation of most of the publishers from the French scene. There is a different theme each year, focussing either a guest country or a subject. In 2002, Italy was the guest country, and a real public affair started when the French Ministry of Culture, Catherine Tasca, announced she would not welcome the leader of Italian government, Silvio Berlusconi, to the inauguration evening. Eventually, this became a real political issue, especially as some of the Italian authors who were invited took part in the polemic by saying they did not wish to be represented by the official delegation. However, despite a few demonstrations that encouraged the delegation to leave precipitately – it was not led by Silvio Berlusconi but, instead, by his Secretary for Cultural affairs Vittorio Sgarbi –, the event finally took place from 22nd to 27th March 2002.

During these six days, Italian literature was physically present in France, through the stands of books for sale, book-signing by authors, conferences, debates and various meetings. It could be argued that this fair was similar to a photographic enlargement of Italian literature in France. In order to describe the event through this prism, I will use my observations and some material gathered during the fair (such as *dépliants* and press files), and show to what extent this fair can be understood as an indicator, barometer or a condensed version of a global process.

The event shall be described as if it were a theatrical performance, with décor, acts, actors and a stage. This follows Erving Goffman's description of everyday life as a stage. He uses the notion of performance to describe individual actions: "I have been using the term 'performance' to refer to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (Goffman, 1959). From our perspective, the notion of performance will be used in its collective dimension, not only in its individual one. There are several dimensions of this "collective", which include the fair in relation to the outside world, professionals in relation to the public, speakers in relation to the public of a conference, and so on. At the same time, the stage will represent the whole fair, the stage of a conference, the shelves of a stand, and so on. It will be argued that together, all these stages constitute a multitude of acts of the overall play.

The book fair will also be envisaged as a specific type of social relations. For example it is a place created for the purpose of the event, and the people who work there are outside their usual working environment, albeit their tasks at the fair do not necessarily differ from the usual tasks.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, booksellers have the task of selling books and press officers make contacts.



In addition, it is attended by a wide spectrum of the public (in terms of age, profession, social environment) and different types of professional people such as writers, publishers, booksellers, critiques, translators and journalists contribute to the originality and unique character of the event. Moreover, the fair is above all a commercial space, as any book shop, but the main difference is that the books are presented by the publishers (each one has a separate stand). In this way, the selection is not made by author but by publisher, sometimes by collection. Finally, this fair is characterised by the coexistence of three different kinds of exchange (Weber, 2000). Firstly, the sale of books constitute monetary exchanges; secondly, there are non-monetary commercial transaction, namely the exchange of services (for instance, the conclusion of an arrangement for a translation), on the model of Mauss' *don contre don*. Finally, the simple transfer without something in return (for instance, the act of giving one's visiting card<sup>1</sup>). The coexistence of these different types of exchange adds to the complexity of the fair, as two people who make contact with each other are not necessarily aware of which type of exchange that they will be engaged in. Taken as a whole, the book fair is characterised by a blending of different dynamics, to the extent that the objectives are often very different: sale, discovery (for the public or the publishers), meeting, making of contacts, negotiation of contracts, and so on.

## 2.1. The physical structure

The 2002 fair lasted from Friday to Wednesday included, and it was open every day from 9.30 am to 7 pm, except on Tuesday, when it was open until 10 pm. The fee was 4.50 euros and provided access for the whole day. It was open to the general public, except on two occasions where a special invitation was needed. The first of these was the inauguration, which took place the Thursday evening preceding the opening. All of the publishers were present, at their stands, as well as many writers, agents, translators and journalists. Every stand offered drinks for the visitors and the head of the publishing house would often give a short informal speech. This evening was largely dedicated to official speeches and making personal contacts. An invitation was also needed for the professional day. This took place on Monday 25th of March, from 9.30 am to 6.30 pm. A professional card or a special invitation were required to gain access. This day was mainly dedicated to the networking between professionals, which took place on a more formal basis than during the inauguration. The conferences dealt with various issues of the publishing world such as the current development of the book industry. At this time, most of the professionals were present, namely people whose profession pertains to the book industry, but

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<sup>1</sup> Even though we could argue that the giver expects something in return, such as being contacted, which would make a commercial transaction.

do not participate directly in the fair (certain employees of the publishing houses, teachers, some journalists...).

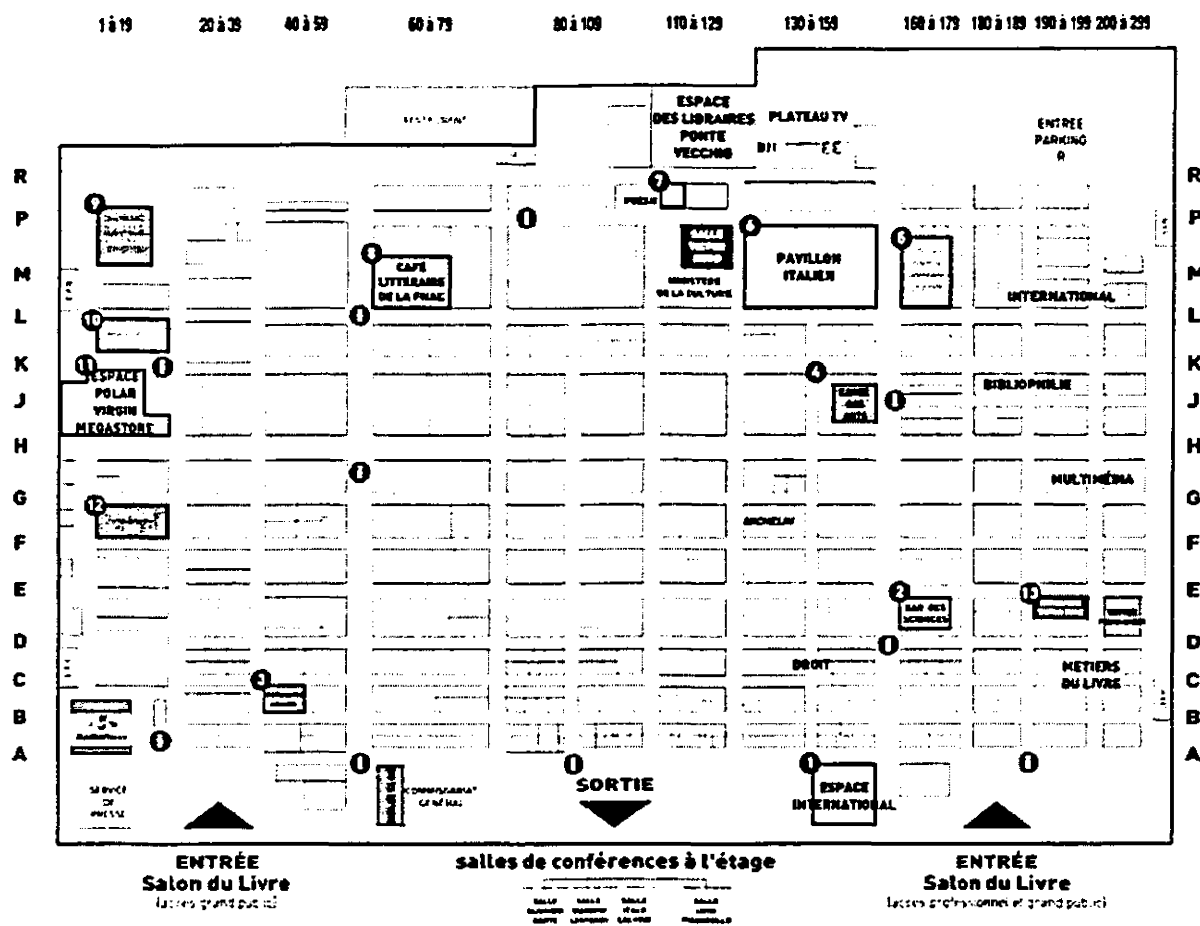
The setting of the fair was physically unique, as well as functionally and symbolically.<sup>1</sup> Here, we are interested in the physical structure in which the actors move. The fair took place in the *Parr des Expositions* at Porte de Versailles, in Paris. Throughout the year, this building (50.000 sq.m) houses various fairs and the décor is changed each time. It is an open space with only one big room with a very high ceiling, divided into approximately 400 stands, mostly publishers' stands. There are also a few particular spaces, such as a small theatre and special places for youth literature, thrillers space and comics (see map below, left hand side). On the right of the plan the international libraries and the multimedia spaces can be found however, unlike the others they are not separated from the rest of the fair by a physical barrier. The Italian house (*pavillon*) is situated at the end of the room (at the top of the map). It is surrounded by the Victor Hugo room, the Ministry of Culture's stand, the authors' forum and the arts space. This place is a sort of barycentre, to the extent that the Italian house is like a centre of influence: the more one gets away from it, the less one can sense the presence of Italy as guest country. The stands of non-specialised publishers are situated towards the middle of the room, and they are the best supplied with Italian literature. All of the other services, bars and restaurants surround the room. Finally, there is only one separate space which consists of the conference rooms which are on the first floor (at the side of the main room), which can be reached by a staircase situated between the two entrances. Above, there are four conference rooms and a wine bar, and the last room is on the second floor. The Victor Hugo room is the only conference room in the main room; it is surrounded by glass walls, which means that it is both closed (with access through a door) and open (the inside is visible from the outside).

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<sup>1</sup> According to Goffman, "First, there is the 'setting', involving furniture, décor, physical lay out, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within or upon it. A setting tends to stay put, geographically speaking, so that those who would use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place and must terminate their performance when they leave it" (Goffman, 1959: 32-33).

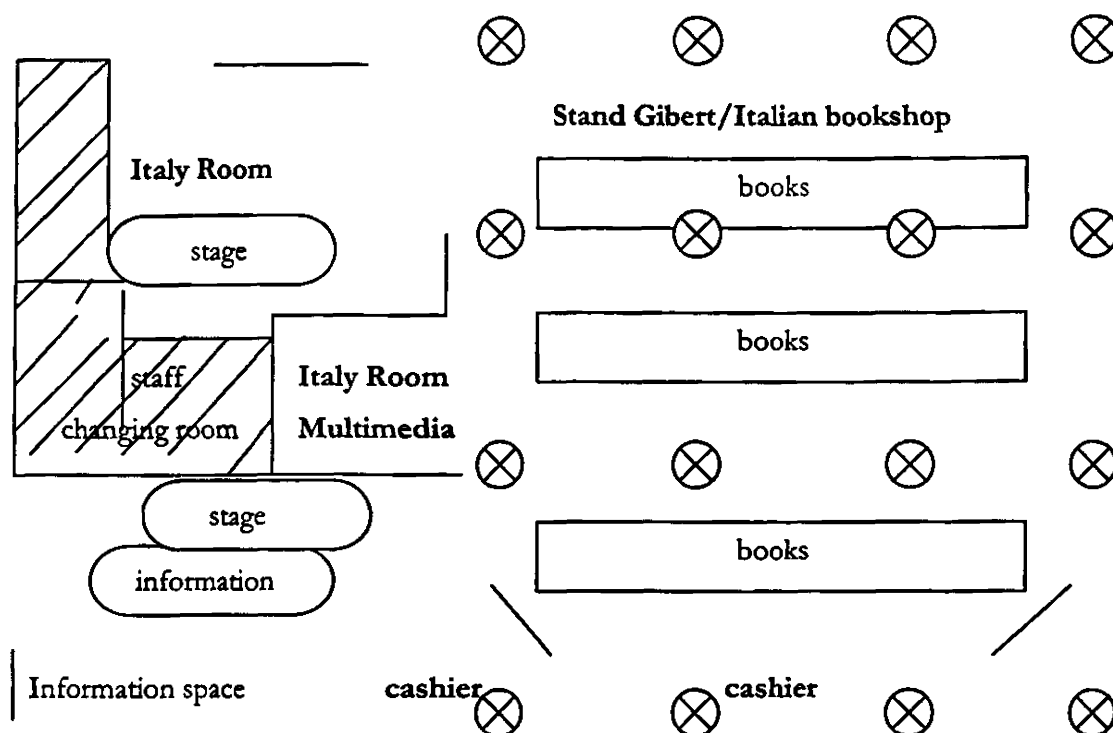
See end Annex 3 for the map of the fair.


Graph 1: Map of the Paris Book Fair



The Italian house appears as one space on the map, however in reality it is also an aggregation of different spaces:

*Graph2: Map of the Italian house*



This house, which measures 660 sq.m, was designed by the Italian architect Pier Luigi Pizzi, based on the model of the Palatine Library in Parma, built in the eighteenth century by the French architect Ennemond-Alexandre Petitot. The bookshop part and the Italy room are constituted of arcades of over seven meters high which are supported by columns. Around the stands, where there is no dark line on the map, it means that the space is open on the rest of the fair. It is the same inside the house, between the different spaces. Each symbol  represents a column. The Italy room is a conference room where exclusively take place meetings pertaining to Italian literature.

The architecture of this stand is unique in the fair, as all of the other stands look like small bookshops, they can only be identified by the placards standing above each stand with the name of the publisher. The Italian house is visible from almost everywhere in the fair, and this gives it a particular presence, physically as well as symbolically.

To sum up, we have four types of space, namely: the publishers' stands; the special stands, such as the Italian house (that centralises most manifestations pertaining to Italy), the literary café and

the comics stand; the conference rooms which are separated from the rest of the fair; the spaces which are not dedicated to books, such as bars, restaurants, services.

Each type of space has a specific function and the conception of their structure is inherent in the specific characteristics of the activities that will take place. Goffman's definition of a region is useful in this respect: "A region may be defined as any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception. (...) Given a particular performance at a point of reference, it will sometimes be convenient to use the term 'front region' to refer to the place where the performance is given. The fixed sign-equipment of such a place has already referred to as that part of the front called 'setting'" (Goffman, 1959: 109-110). The divisions between the stands and the various places in the fair are thus symbolic barriers between different regions. The fact that certain rooms are closed and others surrounded with glass walls indicates the degree of intimacy required by the play that will take place inside. Conferences can be divided in several groups, depending on whether they take place in a closed room (such as the conference rooms upstairs), semi-closed (the Victor Hugo room), or open (the Italy room). For example, all of the conferences "*Une heure avec...*", namely those in which an author responds to questions posed by the public, take place in the Italy room or in the Victor Hugo room. This type of meeting is probably one of the most accessible for a non-specialised audience as it is also possible to follow part of it, and not necessarily stay from the beginning to the end; finally, these meetings also aim to enhance the sales of the author's books. For all these reasons, these conferences are held in open places, accessible and geographically close to the Italian house. However, it is not always easy to find a correlation between the place and the theme, especially if we take into account the fact that there are many organisational constraints as regards the allocation of rooms.

"When an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it" (Goffman, 1959: 37). Here, the notion of "established social roles" refers to the function of each professional during the fair. The definition of a "professional" refers to the fact that he or she must carry out a specific task in a particular place. For instance, a French writer-translator took part in a conference called "two authors and a translator", he had been invited as the translator for two Italian writers, and thus his discourse was translator-oriented. During the conference, he did not act as a writer. The professional image that he presented was only a part of his overall professional self. This was directly related to the place in which he is was acting, which is an already established, and thus fixed, front. The stands, meeting rooms and other particular spaces within the fair were created for a defined function, however, informal activities that take place anyway in these places, namely the activities which

take place outside the official programme. For instance, at the end of the conferences, the speakers and certain members of the public often continued the discussion informally. The stands often have a double function, especially those of the publishers. Although their main purpose is to sell books to the public (the 'official aim'), however, they also provide new opportunities to promote new authors and to meet certain authors. The stands are spaces where the public is invited to spend some time, regardless of whether their interests are non-specialised or specialised (the professionals usually take the time to see their colleagues' catalogues and presentations). We can thus see that the division of space corresponds to a division of the performances of the professionals' work, and that division is practical, as well as symbolical.

In some cases, though, there is a discrepancy between this personal front and the function carried out by the participant. For instance, at the small stands, the post of cashier is often held by anyone who is available (publisher, head of collection, press officer...).<sup>1</sup> There are other examples of the variety of the functions exercised. For instance, in front of the Victor Hugo room, before a conference, there was a long queue, and it appeared that a young woman wearing a badge labelled "*stagiaire*" was in charge of the security. She explained to us that she was not usually engaged in this type of work, however, due to overcrowding, some of the *stagiaires* from the Ministry of Culture have been given this task. In fact, this room had not been built to host more than eighty people, as there is no ventilation, and it is often much more crowded than it was foreseen. However, these two examples should be distinguished: in the first one, the publisher acts as a cashier for planned organisational reasons (small publishers do not hire booksellers for the event). In the second case, the task was allocated by the *stagiaire's* superior. She would not define or introduce herself as someone working for security. Many people are hired for the fair: at the Italian house, for instance, a dozen of young women are in charge of the security and the information. These are all students at the university, and have taken up the opportunity of a short term contract. They have no specific competence with regard to Italian literature. On the first day, they attempted to memorise the lay out of the stand, where the main authors' books are on display, so that they can answer the public's questions. The large publishers often employ cashiers and other individuals who are able to inform the public. They are often attending a Master course in publishing techniques, or simply want to work in this environment. Finally, some of the students are being trained to become booksellers, and therefore, their work at the fair helps them to gain some experience. The fair can provide an opportunity for young people to make contacts in a professional environment

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<sup>1</sup> While I was trying to meet briefly the head of a small publishing house (3 employees), I asked the cashier where I could find the person, and she answered she was the one I was looking for.

There are thus three ways to categorise the employees: the badge, the task effectively carried out, and the self-definition of their role.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.2. The symbolic structure: front and back stage

The idea is now to understand what really happens during this book fair. We have already mentioned the "institutional" activities that are supposed to take place such as sales, conferences and discovery of new literature.<sup>2</sup> We will now show how these activities are structured, and also that the range of activities carried out at the fair is much wider than the official list. This means that there is a possible distinction between formal activities, on the one hand (i.e. planned by the organisers), and informal activities, on the other (that do not pertain to a specific structure). This also corresponds to the symbolic division of space: the physical division of the fair as described above structures the formal activities, but it is also interesting to show how informal activities are *de facto* structured.

In this respect, we shall distinguish between two zones, or regions of activity. On the one hand, there is institutional action, as laid out on the official programme which shows all of the activities that are planned. Space has already been allocated for these activities. We will call it the *front stage* where these events take place. On the other hand, there are activities which are not possible to plan or include in the programme, such as the making of contacts, the exchange of business cards, or simply an informal conversation between two speakers at a conference.<sup>3</sup> The *backstage* is the place where non institutional activities take place. Here, when we use the word "place", it refers to a multitude of places and moments, that may overlap with institutional places. The distinction between the front and the back stage is represented by the programme: if an activity is officially planned, it has a defined place and time and the interaction between the participants (between professionals, between professionals and the public) must follow certain rules (such as use the microphone, speak about a certain topic, use of a polite tone, and so on). Conversely, the backstage activities have no predefined structure. Yet, they also follow certain rules, which pertain to a form of professional deontology.

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<sup>1</sup> At the stand of a small publisher during the professional day, someone asks for the president; a young woman explains he is busy and asks if she can assist. The man answers that it is important, he will wait. The woman replies that she is the press officer, and that he can address her directly if he wants. He ends up talking to her instead; she is obviously a bit offended, and wants to show that her position confers her on a bit of responsibility.

<sup>2</sup> Even if they are not clearly defined, these activities give an idea of the way the fair has been conceived.

<sup>3</sup> "A back region or backstage may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course. There are, of course many characteristic functions of such places. It is here that the capacity of a performance to express something beyond itself may be painstakingly fabricated; it is here that the illusions and impressions are openly constructed. Here stage props and items of personal front can be stored in a kind of compact collapsing of whole repertoires of actions and characters" (Goffman, 1959:114).

We will use this division in order to describe what really occurs at the fair, emphasising the activities which relate to Italy. Naturally, this division does not resolve all of the issues raised: it is impossible to categorise the activities that take place during such a complex event. It is only a scheme that allows us to understand the issues at stake in the way in which space is structured. However, some activities, such as the relations between the members of the public, could fall under both categories (it is planned to the extent that it is part of a literary "discovery", that can occur through conversations; but it is also – mostly – an informal activity that can take place anywhere and at any time). There are at least two possible demarcation lines between these two categories of activity: the first one is the visibility of action. From the perspective of the non-specialised public, an action is visible if it appears possible to participate. Second, another possible line (obviously related to the first one) is the physical place of the action: for each scene, we can define a middle and a "far end". This enables us to adopt Goffman's distinction between *front stage* and *back stage*, that shall be defined more precisely below.

### *Front stage*

The activities outlined in the official programme take place on the *front stage*, or *front region*, which can also be defined as a multitude of individual *fronts*. According to Goffman, "It will be convenient to label as 'front' the part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance. Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance" (Goffman, 1959:32). If the fair is envisaged as a play, then there are many fronts that coexist, mingle with each other, divide the space. They sometime correspond to a practical division (between stands, for instance), but they also often pertain to individual actors. "If we take the term 'setting' to refer to the scenic parts of expressive equipment, one may take the term 'personal front' to refer to the other items of expressive equipment, the items that we most intimately identify with the performer himself and that we naturally expect will follow the performer wherever he goes. As part of personal front we may include: insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like" (Goffman, 1959:34). The structure of the *fronts*, thus, goes further than the separation in different stands, because it has an individual dimension. At the fair, the professionals wear a badge with the logo of the publishing house or association that they represent. This is a sign which creates an a priori barrier between the public and the professionals. For some publishing houses, the name and/or function of the person is also printed on the badge. This is a basic example of *personal front* which identify



the individuals wherever they go. This badge is the symbolic demarcation line between the public and the professionals. There is also a clear division between different categories of professionals such as lecturers and booksellers, however, as both wear a badge, the distinction is less obvious or immediate. They both belong to the category of participants that we refer to as "professionals". "When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed" (Goffman, 1959: 13). Goffman confirms the importance of the badge as the only visible sign of professional identification. Although, it is not the only information available on the individuals (the authors mention the socio-economic status, the attitude towards others, the competence, and so on.), however, it is the only label which is affixed to the individual that makes his or her role at the fair visible.

We will now look more in detail at the activities pertaining to Italian literature. The official slogan of the fair is "*L'Italie à l'honneur*", and it was used in the fair's logo for 2002. The slogan inside the fair that encompasses all of the activities on Italian literature is "*A la découverte de l'Italie*". This is the name of a literary prize organised during the fair, that invites the readers to vote for one of the thirty-four Italian books in the competition. This selection "*permet de faire découvrir le paysage italien contemporain, à travers des auteurs très diversifiés*".<sup>1</sup> More generally, this prize is supposed to present to the French public "*la diversité culturelle italienne à travers sa littérature*".<sup>2</sup> However, this competition does not only take place during the fair as it is open for three months as part of a national promotion in various bookshops. There was thus an amalgam for part of the public between the slogan of the fair, the name of the operation.

There are many activities relating to Italy such as the sale of Italian books, conferences, debates and meetings with authors. The Italian space is like a microcosm of the whole fair, both in time and place. Furthermore, most of the publishers have placed Italian shelves on their stands. There are thus two ways of viewing or purchasing Italian books: either at the Italian house or from publishers. A member of a publishing house (that does not publish any Italian literature) explained to me that she first "spots" the books at the Italian house, and then buys them on the publishers' stands. She presents it as if the act of buying books at the Italian house would be a way of betraying her colleagues. In fact, the act of going from one stand to another is part of the publishers' "game" at the fair: going to the stands and looking at the organisation, the décor, the shelves and the latest books released, and possibly buying something (often for personal use). Conversely, some members of the public commented on how easy it was to buy books at the

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<sup>1</sup> Official Program of the fair, p.6

<sup>2</sup> Official website of the fair, [www.salondulivreparis.com](http://www.salondulivreparis.com) (not active any more)

Italian house. For example, a man who was queuing to pay for six or seven books was relieved as there was no need to go to several publishers and pay several times.

On the whole, level of public interest in Italy had been underestimated by the organisers. For instance, the meeting "*Une heure avec Erri de Luca*" was so successful that the organisers could not contain the crowd, which led to a few incidents. The Italian house was always full, except early in the morning and sometimes overcrowded. Its lay out did not make it easy to circulate among the shelves, and many people complained. It often happened, especially after the meetings with the authors, that some books were completely sold out, and the members of the Italian house had to go to the publisher's stand to ask for more copies. Some books even ran out of print, and the demand could not always be satisfied, which created conflicts with the authors and their agents. For instance, after a conference on "*Le nouvel élan de la littérature italienne*", Niccolò Ammaniti's latest novel was sold out in one hour, and the Italian version of the book could not be supplied before the end of the fair. Only a few French copies of the book could be found at the publisher's stand. These observations lead us to be cautious as regards the sales figures, that would probably have been even higher if the books had been available at the fair.

Most interviewees confirmed the incredible success of Italian literature at the fair, and some of them are even surprised of this interest in Italy:

"En tout cas, il y a eu moins de visiteurs que l'an dernier mais beaucoup plus de ventes, et notamment les livres italiens se sont très bien vendus." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

"Ca a eu un succès énorme. Pas au niveau du salon, parce qu'ils ont eu moins de fréquentations au Salon même que l'année d'avant, mais pour l'Italie ça a été extraordinaire, inattendu. Ils ont vendu tous les livres étrangers qui étaient là, ils en ont manqué au bout du troisième jour, et les traductions se sont aussi bien vendues." (Delphine Vasseur)

"3 miliardi di lire di libri venduti, 30000 libri... Poi, è vero, siamo dei rompi coglioni, non andava mai bene niente a nessuno, grandi fatiche... ma il risultato finale era fantastico. Siamo sempre qui, 'genio e sregolatezza'... ero stupefatto. Mario Rigoni Stern, che ha 81 anni, parlava italiano, e la gente, sbata... il caffè della Fnac, 400 sedie, tutte occupate... Rosetta Loy, la Tamaro... pieno. Non parliamo di Erri de Luca..."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

The first two interviewees emphasize the fact that the success of Italian literature was even more striking because the overall fair was not particularly successful this year. In contrast, the good sales of Italian books appear even higher.

Who are the people who went to the Italian stands? It was observed that a large proportion of the visitors were Italian. There is a significant Italian community in Paris, and it seems from my

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<sup>1</sup> "3 billions of liras of books sold, 30000 books... Then, it's true, we are pains in the neck, never satisfied, it was hard... but the final result was fantastic. We are always there, 'genius and madness'... I was stupefied. Mario Rigoni Stern, who is 81 years old, was speaking Italian, and the people, gaping... The Fnac café, 400 seats, all taken... Rosetta Loy, Tamaro... full. Without mentioning Erri de Luca..."

research that many of them came to the fair in order to keep up with the contemporary literature of their country and to buy books in Italian. At the stands of the Italian publishers, there was nothing to indicate that we were in France. Conversations were in Italian, Italian books were sold and the prices were in euro and lira. However, there were also lots of non-Italians present with an interest in Italy. As we mentioned in chapter 2, the membership of Italian cultural centres and institutes has strongly increased in the past five years, and part of the public were people learning Italian, or at least had a certain knowledge of the country. For instance, some people put up adverts offering flat exchanges between France and Italy for the summer. In this respect, the fair was perceived as an Italian space, a concentration of all of the services and functions usually carried out by the cultural centres, Italian bookshops, Italian schools and to a certain extent the diplomatic services. Finally, there were a number of readers who came to the fair without any specific interest in Italian literature, but who took the opportunity to discover a new literary scene. However, for the majority of the public, it was a continuation rather than a discovery; the fair offered the possibility of satisfying a cultural curiosity that it is not always easy to develop in France.

It is interesting to find out how these people became drawn to Italy and which representations helped them to form their impressions. Many people defined themselves as passionate; they claimed that they loved going to Italy or reading Italian literature. At the same time, they possessed a characteristic attitude of the French towards the Italians which lies between admiration and contempt (see Chapter 3). The stereotypes of Italy are strong and deeply rooted, as the two countries have historically fought for cultural domination, and they have always represented an undeniable point of reference for each other (Waquet, 1989). Sunday, the fair was very crowded, the queue at the entrance was very long and badly organised. It was impossible to understand where it started and as more people arrived no solution had been found to solve the problem. Everybody was in a bad mood and complained about the lack of organisation. Suddenly, a woman exclaimed "of course it is badly organised, the fair is about Italy!". Everybody started to laugh and then they calmed down and waited patiently. The same kind of observation was commonly made at the Italian house, when the queues to the cashiers became very long. These anecdotes illustrate the ambiguity of the French representations of Italy and the Italians, between exasperation and affection. It is interesting for us to see that this historically rooted feature found a palpable expression at the book fair.

Therefore, the visible, or "front stage" activities, often involve the public, although they can only be spectators (in a broad sense) at the fair. Conversely, despite their participation in the activities,

the professionals often become involved in informal transactions and, thus, they become less visible.

### *Back stage*

"Very commonly the back region of a performance is located at one end of the place where the performance is presented, being cut off from it by a partition and guarded passageway. (...) In general, of course, the back region will be the place where the performer can reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude" (Goffman, 1959: 115-116). In the case of the Paris Book Fair 2002, the idea of the 'end of the place' can be interpreted in many ways depending on the scene we chose as a point of reference. If we look at the map, the far end of the main room corresponds to the bars and restaurants, but also to the conference rooms upstairs. Conversely, inside a conference room, the far end can be found at the back of the stage, where the lecturers cannot be heard by the public, even by the people sitting at the front row. Again, inside any stand, there is always a far end that can be discretely occupied by a small group of people who are usually professionals. Together, all of these spaces constitute the *backstage* of the fair. In addition, we can also introduce a temporal dimension here: for instance, the inauguration evening or the professional day create *de facto* a barrier between the public and the professionals, because they are exclusively reserved for the latter. They constitute non-visible moments, to the extent that they can be considered a part of the non-visible space that we aim to describe. Goffman uses in this purpose the metaphor of a video camera on a TV-set: the backstage represents an ensemble of all the off camera (out of set) shots put together (Goffman, 1959: 121).

Some participants, writers, translators and journalists actively engage in making or preserving contacts. Concretely, this involves shaking hands, reminding potential publishers of their name and often (when possible) giving out their business card. Their aim is to establish contacts in order to collaborate in the future, or to solidify contacts that were made on other occasions.

By definition, the fair's 'invisible stage' is difficult to observe. In fact, after spending five days there, it was still not clear to me what really happens between the professionals. I could see small groups talking, or hear them make appointments for later (usually on a definite stand), but it was not possible to ascertain the content of their conversations. For this reason, some abstracts of the interviews will be used in order to provide an idea of what really happens. When asked whether they were used to making contacts at the Paris book fair, their responses were diverse. Some of them made a distinction between the Paris fair and the Frankfurt fair, and stated that Paris was not the place for contacts, and *a fortiori* not for contracts.

"Globalement le Salon n'est pas un lieu de négociations, pas comme Francfort. Le but est plutôt de faire acheter au public. Il existe des tractations, mais elles sont Parallèles. A l'inauguration, il y a des traducteurs qui viennent nous voir. Cette année j'ai pris un contact, mais qui sera peut-être sans suite." (Myriam Couratier)

Et quand on a un invité d'honneur, comme l'Italie l'an dernier, les éditeurs viennent accompagner leurs auteurs pour faire la promotion de la littérature italienne, mais c'est pas un lieu où on signe des contrats, non. A Francfort et à Londres, oui. A la limite, là où on a pu vraiment négocier des choses, c'était une semaine avant, à la foire de Londres, où on voit aussi nos confrères italiens. Mais pas à la porte de Versailles, non, c'est pas une foire de droit. (Jean Dupasquier)

However, this opinion was not shared by all publishers:

*"Je vous pose une dernière question, par rapport au salon du livre de paris. Est-ce que ça arrive qu'il y ait des préaccords ?*

Oui.

*Il y a des espaces, pour ça ?*

Non, il y a pas d'espaces, mais il y a de plus en plus d'éditeurs étrangers qui viennent pour ça. Ils viennent pour prospecter, parce que, bon, ils voient qu'ils ont le temps. Tout est là, aussi, alors qu'à Francfort, juste ce qu'on veut vendre, ce qui vient de sortir, et les coûts. C'est de plus en plus comme ça, alors que... et notamment, ils viennent à Paris parce qu'ils savent qu'il y a tous les éditeurs qui n'ont pas forcément une représentation à Francfort, c'est-à-dire les indépendants... et donc là, ils ont tout le catalogue, et ils savent que les éditeurs seront là aussi, et ils sont là pour discuter, les éditeurs, pas pour vendre forcément, c'est pas la même logique que Francfort, où ils ont pas de temps. Donc, il y en a de plus en plus qui viennent comme ça, ballade, découverte. Et moi, les collègues européens, aussi bien les italiens que les espagnols, les... ils me le disent, eux, maintenant ils vont venir chaque année, même un week-end, même quand c'est pas leur pays." (Claudine Plessier)

In fact, talking about contacts, it can be difficult to clearly define all of the steps that lead to a collaboration. Instead, it could be seen as a series of occasions that create the right conditions.

"Vous savez, c'est quand même un endroit où on rencontre beaucoup de gens, c'est un endroit un peu privilégié dans l'année de rencontres avec des libraires, des autres éditeurs, des éditeurs ou des agents étrangers qui passent à Paris... et donc, si on n'est pas là, ils nous trouvent pas.

*Vous y avez déjà engagé des contrats ?*

Ca arrive. Non pas sur le lieu, mais d'avoir mis en route des idées qui, ensuite... ça arrive qu'on me donne des livres, je les lis, j'achète les titres... ça arrive. Moins qu'à Francfort, c'est pas du tout la même configuration. Et puis, vous savez, de toutes façons c'est très difficile de quantifier l'un et l'autre, c'est un travail diffus, constant, c'est difficile après de dire "tiens, ça je l'ai vu à ...". Non, c'est un long travail de relations qu'on tisse. Moins qu'à Francfort, c'est pas du tout la même configuration. Et puis, vous savez, de toutes façons c'est très difficile de quantifier l'un et l'autre, c'est un travail diffus, constant, c'est difficile après de dire "tiens, ça je l'ai vu à ...". Non, c'est un long travail de relations qu'on tisse." (Anna Moresco)

This illustrates the fact that collaborations are not decided at one time, but there are several steps. According to the degree of achievement of the contact, the Paris book fair can be the place for connecting, or the place where the idea of a collaboration is evoked for the first time, or that of the conclusion of a concrete arrangement for a collaboration. We also need to mention that these contacts involve the professionals, but also some members of the public who somehow aspire to enter the field. For these people, the idea of potential contacts attracts them to the fair.

For instance, while waiting for a conference to start on one occasion, it was observed that the choice of seats in the room was a real issue, to the extent that one position determines whether the lecturer can be heard and whether the person can be identified. The latter dimension is the most important in some ways, as the acoustics are similar throughout the room. It is not good to be too close (the first two rows), in order to avoid giving the impression that one wants to be seen at any cost, by putting themselves on display. The moderator arrived, many people obviously knew him and tried to go and speak to him. He shook some people hands and smiled, but only spoke to a few of them. A woman stood in front of him and told him she wanted to see him for a moment after the conference; he smiled and answered very evasively that he would see her, but not on that day. This illustrates the fact that in the closed space of a conference room, the issues at stake are very different for the participants: the lecturers come to speak about their research. In the audience, some come to listen, others also hope to make contact with one of the lecturers, and so on. There is like a hierarchical relationship between the participants, based on the kind of "mask" (to use Goffman's expression) that they are wearing at the time. Here, the moderator of the conference was very solicited because he is the coordinator of a project he was presenting (a paper on a bibliography of Italian translations into French before the twentieth century). He is also the head of a small publishing house in Bari; thus, we can easily assume that he was often in the position of making contacts elsewhere and during other parts of the fair, for instance with the hope of discovering some French authors, or collaborating with some French publishers.

We can see that the participants often change their 'mask' according to the situation and the people that they encounter. The metamorphoses take place at different levels: at the professional level – one may be publisher, a coordinator of a project, in some cases a translator -. At a more hierarchical level: one may hold positions of responsibility, equality, superiority. During the official activities, those of the *front stage*, the professionals usually only wear one mask, and they are immediately in a superior position towards the public. The relationship between professionals, on the scene, must preserve some kind of – at least apparent – neutrality. According to Goffman, the actors form part of a team: "I will use the term 'performance team' or, in short, 'team', to refer to any set of individuals who cooperate in staging a single routine" (Goffman, 1959: 85). The actors thus collaborate in the performance and, in our case, in the conference. However, as soon as it is over, they return to their position of individual actors with different masks.

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In this chapter, we have pictured the French publishing world as a field, a market and a scene. It is an entity that relates to other entities: the economic world (via the financial groups that own part of the publishing houses), the specialists of Italian literature and the foreign scenes. We envisage this world as a field, in the sense of Bourdieu, but we argue that this notion does not exclude the other two. In a way, the tension between field and market can be interpreted as a metaphor of the tension between the economic and the symbolic poles which characterizes the publishing world today. In fact, the reference to commercial literature, especially American, conveys the idea that the economic constraint indeed weighs on the publishers' action. Besides, envisaging this world as a scene emphasizes the fact that a field is also an aggregation of actors – or performers – who interact and whose action is productive of a cultural project. There are different décors and sequences, and the example of the Paris 2002 Book Fair illustrates how this scene works, especially in relation to Italian literature.

Now that the décor of the action is set, we can look into the functioning of the publications of Italian novels in France. To start with, we will look at the actors of this publication (to the extent that the process of publication is the result of the action of an aggregation of actors, collective and individuals): who are they, and are there patterns in time in their characterization?





## Chapter 4: Who is translated, published and by whom?

### The corpus of novels 1982-2001

We have already seen that there has been a clear increase in the publication of Italian fiction by French publishers at the beginning of the 1980s, and that the number of books released still remains high. One of the issues at stake in this research is to understand who exactly are the actors of this increase. Thus far, we have dealt with the nature of the French publishing world through the question of its qualification as a field, scene and market. However, at a more concrete level, we need to ascertain which individuals are involved in the publication process. Our point here is not to compile an exhaustive list of all of the people involved, as this would require a different type of fieldwork. In this case, we will focus on two kinds of actors, namely the publishers (which can denote either individuals or companies) and translators. We will thus use the corpus of novels translated from Italian into French between 1982 and 2001 as a basis for reflection. We will analyse this through the prism of the increase in translations that has already been highlighted in order to analyse whether this can be attributed to a change in the publishers and translators involved. Nonetheless, it is impossible to understand the nature of this rise without looking at the content of what has actually increased, which necessitates discussing the authors published in France. This will constitute an indispensable part of our description of the actors involved in the publication process.

However, the idea of an increase implies that the publications of Italian books in France was quite low before the 1980s. This was not a unified level or structure, but it was low enough to consider it as a "before", as opposed to the "after" we are dealing with.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, it should be remembered that the actors we are describing participate in a process which cannot be understood outside the actual cultural context. We shall also investigate whether this boom is temporary and whether it is related to larger scale phenomena, such as the so-called cultural globalisation.

It will be argued that statistics are a useful tool for description, however, they only assist us at a superficial level. They give an idea of the quantitative trends in the publications of Italian literature in France of the type of actors involved in the 1980s and 1990s. The following chapters will address the results of the fieldwork conducted, mostly through interviews, which allow us to analyse the various interpretations of this process. However, the statistical description is a necessary preliminary phase.

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<sup>1</sup> At this point, it is important to understand if 1982 is an approximate date for the start or if it can be considered as a symbolical point of rupture with the anterior period.

## 1. THE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF AUTHORS

### 1.1. Overview of the variety of the Italian authors published in France

The first issue raised by the corpus is the nature of the books it gathers. They can be divided by genre and by authors. We have explained above that one of the criteria chosen for the constitution of the corpus was the genre (narrative fiction). However, there are different kinds of narrative fiction, such as short stories, detective stories, historical novels and so on. An analysis in terms of genre would be interesting, but this is unfortunately impossible to undertake because none of the sources used was precise enough, and also because the size of the corpus makes it impossible to check it for every book.<sup>1</sup> We shall attempt to examine what has been translated and published by looking at the authors in question. In fact, the idea of generations will be particularly useful in this regard, including both the age of the authors and the date in which their first book was published in France. One of the problems with the corpus is that we do not know whether the books have been published for the first time or not. Certainly, it is obvious that Dante's *Divina Commedia* was not released for the first time in the 1990s, however, if a novel was published in 1987 and again in 1999, it leads us to consider whether there was a first edition in the 1970s or not. As far as our corpus is concerned, we will thus look at the number of books by an author, the number of re-editions between 1982 and 2001, comparing the number of books and the number of titles, the date of the author's first book translated into French, and the date of the author's birth (and death) of the author.

Before going any further, it is important to remember the distinction between "titles" and "books":<sup>2</sup> if a writer publishes four titles in France and also four books, it means that no title has been re-edited, and we can assume that they did not sell very well. Conversely, if a book translated into French is published in five different editions, then it makes sense to consider it as a commercial success. In the classifications presented above, we have chosen to take into account the number of titles rather than the number of books because it allows us to compare writers from different periods. For example, if three of D'Annunzio's books were published in the 1980s and 1990s, they are by definition re-editions (or first publications of books released a long time ago in Italy); hence, it makes sense to take them into account: why republish a book by D'Annunzio in 1993? In contrast, for a young writer of the 1990s, if three titles are published, it does not necessarily mean that they are successful, as the publishers often tend to follow young

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<sup>1</sup> Not to mention the fact that it is very problematic to attribute any kind of etiquette to novels: a historical novel can also be a thriller, and so on.

<sup>2</sup> "Title" refers to the manuscript, the content of the book. "Book" refers to a particular edition of a novel.

authors in the hope that they will break through at some point. In this way, the comparison of the number of titles rather than books attenuates this distinction and makes it easier to make parallels between different generations.

There are a total of 1550 books within this corpus which have been written by 429 different authors. Ten of these authors have had more than sixteen titles published in French during this period: Lenoardo Sciascia (29), Italo Calvino (28), Alberto Moravia (27), Umberto Eco (24), Dino Buzzati (21), Pier Paolo Pasolini (21), Carlo Emilio Gadda (20), Antonio Tabucchi (17), Luigi Pirandello (17) and Alberto Savinio (17). Among them, there are large differences in the proportion of titles that have been re-edited during the period: from 88% (15 titles out of 17) for Antonio Tabucchi to 6% only (1 title out of 17) for Alberto Savinio. Similar to Tabucchi, Umberto Eco and Italo Calvino's works also have often been re-edited (more than three quarters of their works were reedited); for Moravia, Buzzati and Pasolini, the proportion stands between 40 and 50%, whereas all the others have had less than one third of their titles re-edited.

Eleven authors published between ten and sixteen titles during the period: Giorgio Manganelli (16), Primo Levi (14), Giorgio Scerbanenco (14), Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini (13), Andrea Camilleri (12), Mario Rigoni Stern (12), Mario Soldati (12), Susanna Tamaro (11), Anna Maria Ortese (11), Italo Svevo (10) and Luigi Malerba (10). There disparities are again visible in the proportion of titles published at least twice during the two decades: between 80% and 100% for Fruttero and Lucentini, Tamaro and Levi, between 33% and 50% for Camilleri, Svevo and Rigoni Stern, and less than a third for the others (none for Scerbanenco).

After these 21 authors who were most published, eleven other ones published between ten and fourteen books: Alessandro Baricco (14), Erri de Luca (14), Valerio Evangelisti (11), Cesare Battisti (11), Andrea De Carlo (11), Rosetta Loy (11), Vitaliano Brancati (11), Curzio Malaparte (11), Gabriele D'Annunzio (10), Tommaso Landolfi (10) and Valerio Manfredi (10). Here again, large variations can be seen in the profiles: D'Annunzio (1863-1938) was the most famous author of the fascist period, writing poetry as well as theatre pieces and novels; whereas Cesare Battisti (born in 1954), was an ex-member of the extreme left movement Lotta Continua, who escaped his country and firstly settled in Mexico, and then in France in 1990, where he began to write detective stories.

We can, firstly, observe that none of these authors are part of the "classics", such as Dante, Leopardi or Boccace. However, this does not mean that they are no longer revised after 1982. In contrast, there were three editions of Boccace's Decameron published in the 1990s (in a pocket

edition by the Librairie Générale Française in 1994, by Selliers in 1994 and *Le Grand livre du mois* in 2000) and Dante's complete work in the very prestigious *Pléiade* in 1992, and in Gallimard's pocket edition in 1996 and 1999. The huge work of a small publisher, Allia, should also be mentioned as he made several of Leopardi's works available, that were previously unknown in France. However, these publications do not constitute an overall trend in the publications of the late twentieth century.

Our aim is not to present an overview of Italian contemporary literature, but instead to provide a panorama of the authors that were most frequently translated (or published, or republished) in France between 1982 and 2001. The idea is to compare this list of writers with those presented in the specialised literature: does the publication of Italian literature in France reflect the image that is presented by the historians of literature? Or do these historians write about what is published in France? We will try to show that these two phenomena should be studied together – i.e. publications, on the one hand, definition by the critique of "what is important", on the other hand.

In June 1987 an overview of all of Italian authors translated into French from the beginning of the twentieth century was published.<sup>1</sup> There was a map of Italy on the first page, presenting the major authors and their region of origin. Apart from Andrea Camilleri and Susanna Tamaro, who had not yet begun to write, most of the twenty-one authors who published the most books between 1982 and 2001 were on the map. Tabucchi, Fruttero and Lucentini, Malerba, Ortese, Gadda, Rigoni Stern, Savinio, Soldati and Scerbanenco are excluded, however, they are mentioned later on in the journal. The remaining ten are presented in this journal as part of the thirty-seven major Italian authors. It is surprising that the other twenty-seven authors do not belong to our list of most published authors, however, there are several explanation for this. Firstly, some of these are important more because they wrote an excellent piece of work rather than because they published many books. For instance, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Il gattopardo* was first released in Italy in 1957, and then in France in 1959, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1977 and 1980.<sup>2</sup> The rest of his works were partly translated but he is always referred to in the critiques as the author of the *Gattopardo*. Secondly, some of the authors did not specialise in narrative fictions, such as Giuseppe Ungaretti or Andrea Zanzotto, who mostly wrote poetry, and thus do not appear in our corpus.<sup>3</sup> Finally, some of these authors were simply not published after 1987. A good example of this is Elsa Morante. Although her most famous book, *La storia*, was

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<sup>1</sup> "Cent ans de littérature italienne", *L'ail de la lettre*, June 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Three more versions are then published in 1995 and 1996.

<sup>3</sup> The choice of narrative fiction was justified, at least partly, by the fact that the other genres, especially poetry, are not good indicators of the trends in translation, because the public is even more restricted, and the critique is even more specialised.

published in 1977, 1978, 1980 and 1989, it was not re-edited in the 1990s. The only books released recently by this author were an essay against atomic bombing,<sup>1</sup> some short stories<sup>2</sup> and her diary.<sup>3</sup>

In an introductory article to a special issue on Italian literature, Mario Fusco distinguishes between two generations of authors (Fusco, 1987). Firstly, there is the "old guard", which includes writers such as Moravia, but also Calvino, Morante, Soldati, Sciascia, Manganelli or Ginzburg. Next, he comments on the appearance of a younger group, part of which had already been published before the 1980s. "*La littérature italienne s'est longtemps résumée, pour le lecteur français, à quelques auteurs prestigieux, Morante, Moravia ou Sciascia. Puis apparurent Italo Calvino et Umberto Eco, dont Le nom de la Rose vient d'être adapté à l'écran. L'immense succès de ces deux auteurs a retenti sur l'ensemble de la péninsule. Les traductions de l'italien se multiplient depuis trois ans*" (Fusco, 1987: 16).

This testifies to the fact that there was a gap in the perception of Italian literature in France in the middle of the 1980s. In other words, the emergence of the younger generation mentioned above is the result of a broader phenomenon, namely an increasing interest in Italian literature. What we referred to as the "old guard" merges the older generation and the younger one, however, we need to distinguish between the different groups within the old guard. We will thus present these different generations of writers published in France, focusing on the date of publication of their first novel in France and the total number of works translated into French. Nevertheless, we will remain at a very descriptive level, as our aim is simply to provide tools for understanding the nature of the trends in the publications in the 1980s and 1990s. We will be more analytical in our discussion of the publishers and translators, as we are focusing on these actors.

Before analysing the different generations in any detail, the exceptional case of Umberto Eco should be mentioned. The world famous professor, who has a chair at Bologna University, was born in 1932 in Alessandria (Piemont); he published his first essay in France in 1965,<sup>4</sup> followed by another in 1972 and a re-edition of the first one in 1979.<sup>5</sup> His first novel, *Il nome della rosa*, published in 1981 in Italy and in 1982 in France by Grasset, is a real editorial event. He received the Medici étranger Prize in 1982 and it was voted book of the year by the magazine Lire. By 1988, 800,000 copies had been sold in France, with eight million worldwide (Colin 1996: 118). This incredible success clearly paved the way for the translation of young Italian authors into

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<sup>1</sup> Morante Elsa, *Pour ou contre la bombe atomique (Pro o contro la bomba atomica e altri scritti)*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992, (Arcades).

<sup>2</sup> Morante Elsa, *Le Châle andalou et autres nouvelles, (Lo scialle andaluso)*, Paris, Gallimard, 1998, (Folio bilingue; 75).

<sup>3</sup> Morante Elsa, *Territoire du rêve (Diario 1938)*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999, (Arcades; 62).

<sup>4</sup> *L'œuvre ouverte*, Seuil, 1965.

<sup>5</sup> *La structure absente*, Mercure de France, 1972, and the pocket edition of *L'œuvre ouverte* by Seuil in 1979.

French.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Eco does not fit easily into any generation: he was born between the two World Wars, he was first published in France in 1965, he published at least fifty books before 2002 (novels, essays, pamphlets, etc.), but he cannot be compared to any of the writers of his generation. In this way, he is, himself, a turning point in the history of the introduction of Italian literature in France.

#### *Umberto Eco*

Born in 1932 in Alessandria, Piemonte.

After philosophy studies, he worked for Rai (Radio Televisione Italiana) from 1954 to 1959, he was part of the Group 63 and collaborated with Bompiani editions. Since 1971, he has been teaching semiology at the University of Bologna. He has written numerous and eclectic essays, easily switching topic from Thomas d'Aquin to *Playboy*, from James Joyce to the TV series *Derrick*. His first novel, *The Name of the Rose*, was a huge success across the world (and so was Jean-Jacques Annaud's cinematographic adaptation of the book). Since then, he has published three novels (*Il pendolo di Foucault*, *L'isola del giorno prima*, *Bandolano*). All of these have been translated into dozens of foreign languages.

### 1.2. The 'old guard'

According to Mario Fusco, the only authors who were famous before the 1980s, Moravia, Morante and Sciascia, belong to what we can call the first generation, together with others such as Svevo, Pirandello and Buzzati. They were all born between 1860ss and the first World War. Moreover, they all had a novel translated into French before the 1950s. In this respect, it is questionable to include Leonardo Sciascia in this first generation, since he was born in 1921 and was first published in France in 1962. All the same, Elsa Morante's *L'île d'Arturo* was published by Gallimard in 1962, her first novel translated into French (by Michel Arnaud). For this reason, and also because she is not one of the most translated authors in the 1980s and 1990s, she does not fit into this category. Conversely, we could include Mario Soldati (1908-1999), whose first novel was released in France in 1947,<sup>2</sup> and Alberto Savinio (1891-1952).<sup>3</sup> In addition, Giorgio Scerbanenco was born in 1911 and first published in France in 1942.<sup>4</sup> It is quite surprising to include him as he is hardly ever quoted among the "classics", particularly due to the fact that he wrote detective stories, and thus differs from all of the others. Other names could be added to the list, such as Giovanni Verga or Curzio Malaparte, but the aim here is not to create an

<sup>1</sup> An in-depth analysis of Umberto Eco's success in France will be presented in Chapter 7.

<sup>2</sup> It was *La vérité sur l'affaire Motta*, translated by Marie Canavaggia, published by Pavois. The same year, *Amérique, premier amour*, same translator, was published by Porrentruy in Brussels.

<sup>3</sup> His first book published in France was *Psyché*, translated by Henri Parisot, published by Premières in 1950.

<sup>4</sup> *Au-delà du bonheur*, translated by Serge Benoist, A.B.C editions.

exhaustive picture of modern and contemporary Italian literature, but rather to present the authors who continue to be published in the past two decades.

This group of seven authors is useful in the context of our analysis as they are part of those who had most books published between 1982 and 2001, which means that they belong to the "classics" who have received renewed interest recently. We will refer to these authors as the "old guard". It should also be noted that they are not a homogeneous group, as the following table shows.

Table 4.1. *The old guard*

Name	Date of birth	Date of death	Region	First title in France	Total 1982-2001	Total 1900-2001	Total 1900-1981
Italo Svevo	1861	1928	Frioul	1927	15	26	11
Luigi Pirandello	1867	1936	Sicily	1910	23	43	20
Alberto Savinio	1891	1952	Greece	1950	18	26	8
Dino Buzzati	1906	1972	Frioul	1949	31	59	28
Alberto Moravia	1907	1990	Rome	1931	40	103	63
Mario Soldati	1908	1999	Piedmont	1947	13	28	15
Giorgio Scerbanenco	1911	1969	Lombardy	1942	14	29	15

### Portraits.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Italo Svevo (1861-1928)*

Italy Svevo is a pseudonym for Ettore Schmitz. After a long stay in Germany, he became a bank clerk in Trieste in 1880, where he stayed for 18 years. He lived a modest life there which inspired his first novels, *Una vita* and *Senilità*. He was also strongly influenced by French realism. Discouraged by the lack of success of these two pieces, he did not publish anything for twenty years. In 1899 he was employed by a firm fabricating paintings for ship hulls and thus started to travel a lot. He met Sigmund Freud and translated his *Science of dreams*, thus developing a strong interest in psychoanalysis; in fact, his following novel *La coscienza di Zeno*, related a psychoanalytical cure. This book, together with James Joyce's support (they were friends since 1903) and several eulogistic

<sup>1</sup>Sources: "Cent ans de littérature italienne", *L'œil de la lettre*, June 1987, and <http://www.librairie-compagnie.fr/italie/auteurs.htm>

articles by Eugenio Montale and Valéry Larbaud in France, paved the way for Svevo's success in Europe.

*Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936)*

Pirandello won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1934.

He was born in Sicily and was greatly influenced by his origins. However, he lived in Bonn for a while and studied in Rome. His plays are famous all over the world and he is considered one of the best playwrights of the century. He is also famous for his short stories and novels.

*Alberto Savinio (1891-1936)*

Savinio is Giorgio De Chirico's younger brother. After his father's death, he started to travel around with his family. He studied musical composition in Munich, went to Paris where he met Apollinaire. In 1914, he published *Les Chants de la mi-mort* in French. He then lived in Milan and Rome, and came back to Paris in 1925 where he quite successfully spent some time painting. He went back to Italy in 1934 and started to write tales, chronicles and drama.

*Dino Buzzati (1906-1972)*

He had an early start as a journalist for *Corriere della Sera*, where he wrote articles for over forty years. His first novel *Barnabo* was released in 1933, and *Il deserto dei tartari* in 1940 (it was made into a film by Valerio Zurlini in 1976). He mostly wrote fantasy stories, but also children tales, burlesque poetry, plays (one of which was adapted in French by Albert Camus in 1953). He also excelled in fine arts such as painting, drawing, set design and comics.

*Alberto Moravia (1907-1990)*

Alberto Moravia is the pseudonym for Alberto Pincherle.

From the age of nine, an illness left him immobile and he spent most of his time reading. He was only thirteen when his first book of poetry was published, and twenty-two his first novel (*Gli Indifferenti*). His many novels have been very successful. He also worked as a journalist, and was particularly recognised for his cinematographic critiques.

*Mario Soldati (1908-1999)*

He started as a script writer for Mario Camerini, among others, and then directed several films, some of which were based on novels by Antonio Fogazzaro (*Piccolo mondo antico* in 1944, *Malombra* in 1946) and Alberto Moravia (*La provinciale*, 1953). He moved from cinema to literature in the 1960s. He was fascinated by unusual dilemma or predicaments, and this can be seen through his literary work, which has a strong psychological dimension.

*Giorgio Scerbanenco (1911-1969)*

After twenty years of writing short stories and sentimental novels, he invented the private investigator Duca Lamberti, a doctor who was no longer allowed to practice and collaborated with Milan's police headquarters. He was famous for his detective novels, which were the only ones translated into French. Their strength lies in the accurate description of Milan in the 1960s.



### 1.3. The 'intermediate guard'

The second generation is constituted by the other authors who were already famous in France before the 1980s, such as Calvino, Ortese, Levi, Sciascia, Rigoni Stern, Pasolini, Malerba, Fruttero and Lucentini. They were all born between the two World Wars and first published in France in the 1950s or 1960s. This group is also very heterogeneous, at the level of their individual characteristics, as well as the genre of novels that they write. For instance, Primo Levi's novel about concentration camps (*Se questo è un uomo*) is famous worldwide and it was published three times in French.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Sciascia wrote realistic novels about Sicilian questions, Rigoni Stern about nature, Fruttero and Lucentini wrote detective stories.<sup>2</sup> This generation is the youngest part of the 'old guard', however, it is still older and it published earlier in France than the new generation of the 1980s. Hence, the designation of this group as the "intermediate guard".

Table 4.2. The 'intermediate guard'

Name	Date of birth	Date of death	Region	First title in France	Total for 1982-2001	Total for 1900-2001	Total for 1900-1981
Anna Maria Ortese	1914	1998	Rome	1965	12	15	3
Primo Levi	1919	1987	Piemont	1961	25	28	3
Leonardo Sciascia	1921	1989	Sicily	1962	38	61	23
Mario Rigoni Stern	1921	-	Veneto	1954	14	17	3
Pier Paolo Pasolini	1922	1975	Frioul	1958	30	39	9
Italo Calvino	1923	1985	Liguria	1955	49	77	28
Luigi Malerba	1927	-	Emilia	1967	12	15	3
Carlo Fruttero/ Franco Lucentini	1920/ 1926	-	Turin/ Rome	1973	26	32	6

<sup>1</sup> *J'étais un homme*, Buchet-Chastel, 1961. This was revised twice with a different title, *Si c'est un homme*, Julliard, 1987, and Presses-Pocket, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> See below for biographical notices of these authors.

*Anna Maria Ortese (1904-1988)*

She lived in Libya and in many Italian cities (her father was a military official) before settling in Rapallo, near Genoa, where she remained from 1978 onwards with her older sister. At the age of 18 she stopped her piano studies and started writing. She published short stories and tales in literary journals. Her first novel *Angeli dolori*, which was published in 1937, was quite controversial. Her constant use of fantastic forms in her writing isolated her within the Italian literary scene. She was rediscovered in 1965 with *L'iguana*, quite a successful novel that was translated into French in the 1960s and re-edited in 1988.

*Primo Levi (1919-1987)*

He was a chemist engineer from Turin, who was deported to Auschwitz where he stayed from February 1944 to January 1945. He became well-known in 1947 with *Se questo è un uomo*, which related his experience in the concentration camps. He committed suicide on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1987.

*Leonardo Sciascia (1921-1989)*

He spent all of his life in his native land, Sicily, which he constantly placed at the centre of his work. He analysed the phenomenon of the Mafia (*Le parocchie di rigalpetra*, 1956, *Gli zii di Sicilia*, 1958) and wrote an essay on Pirandello (*Pirandello e il pirandellismo*, 1953). He was also interested in politics, and worked for a while for the municipality of Palermo. In 1978, wrote *Il caso Moro* (after Aldo Moro was murdered) and gave a very long interview in France.

*Mario Rigoni Stern (1921-)*

He is from Venice, with Austrian ancestors. During the Second World War, he fought with the Italian army in France, Greece, Albania and Russia. He recalled his terrible experience of winter in Russia 1942-1943 in *Il serpente sotto la neve* (1953). He published several other novels based on his war memories, and also others, which exalted nature, landscapes and animals.

*Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975)*

During his childhood, he lived in different places of northern Italy as his father was a military officer. After literary studies, he became a school teacher in 1949 in a suburb of Rome. The basis for his inspiration were his fascination for the Roman proletariat and the intellectual and artistic fever of post-war Italy. He wrote poetry, novels, essays and also directed films, new as radical dissident and non-conformist. He remained on the front of the intellectual stage for over twenty years, before being murdered in suspicious circumstances.

*Italo Calvino (1923-1985)*

Calvino was one of the most unique and striking figures of Italian contemporary literature. A novelist, critic and journalist, he also played a key role in the Italian publishing and intellectual field. He spent his childhood in Liguria, but moved to Turin after the war where he worked for Einaudi. He took part in the resistance and was a member of the Communist Party until 1956. In 1959, together with Elio Vittorini, he founded the review *Il Menabo*, which had a central role in the literary debate of the 1960s. In 1965, he moved to Paris (where he lived for 15 years) and was close to the Oulipo movement. He was also one of the main figures of the Franco Italian intellectual exchanges until his death.

*Luigi Malerba (1927-)*

Malerba is the pseudonym for Luigi Bonardi. He collaborated to the journals *Alfabeta* and *Nuovi Argomenti*. He was an active member of the Group 63, and he worked on various film scripts. He first published short stories in 1966, and followed by several novels, and a series of children books together with Tonino Guerra.

*Carlo Fruttero / Franco Lucentini (1926/1920-)*

Fruttero and Lucentini worked together for over forty years. Translators (they speak more than twenty languages altogether), directors of collections, journalists and novelists, this duo produced a series of "metaphysical" detective novels, some of which were international best-sellers. The first one (*La donna della domenica*) was adapted by Luigi Comencini in 1976, with Marcello Mastroianni as Detective Santamaria.

#### 1.4. The 'relieving troop'

The main figure of this new generation was Antonio Tabucchi, along with Andrea De Carlo, Daniele Del Giudice, Pier Vincenzo Tondelli and Aldo Busi.<sup>1</sup> In fact, two of these authors, namely De Carlo<sup>2</sup> and Del Giudice,<sup>3</sup> were themselves launched by one of the leaders of the previous generation, Italo Calvino, who lived in Paris between 1965 and 1980 and played an important role in the introduction of Italian literature to France at that time.

From our perspective, these authors have at least one common trait as they were first published in France in the 1980s. We can also add Vincenzo Consolo (born in 1934 and first published in 1980) and Giorgio Manganelli to the list of the authors mentioned above. Even though he is older than most of the "young generation", he was first published in France in 1985. In a way, it makes sense since to include him as he started to write literature late in life. his participation to the Group 63 would lead us to put him with the "intermediate guard", but he was not known by the French public beforehand. It is interesting to note that the construction of the history of Italian literature in Italy differs from its projection in France. In other words, if two authors are discovered at the same time, they may be associated in the representation of Italian literature in France. This shows that the 1980s were an important period in France as far as introduction of Italian literature in France was concerned: *"Tel est le tableau de la situation générale."*

<sup>1</sup> On these authors, Jean-Paul Manganaro wrote: "Il est désormais de bon ton de connaître par cœur les noms des cinq "jeunes écrivains italiens" ", (Manganaro, 1987: 21).

<sup>2</sup> His first books were *Oiseaux de cage et de volière*, Liana Levi, 1984, and *Chantilly express*, Rivages, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> *Le stade de Wimbledon*, Rivages, 1985.

*Non seulement les auteurs nouveaux s'imposent avec succès, mais partout on essaye de combler les vides éventuels"* (Manganaro, 1987: 22).

However, only Manganelli and one author from the young generation are part of the twenty-one most published authors in France between 1982 and 2001. De Carlo is in twenty-ninth position with eight titles (and eleven books altogether), and in this respect he should still be important in the 1990s. Del Giudice published only six books (and four titles) during the whole period, Tondelli four titles, and Busi three.

*Giorgio Manganelli (1924-1990)*

Manganelli translated literature (in particular, Poe's work), wrote prefaces for books and critiques, and also worked as a publisher, a journalist for *Corriere della Sera*, and was an active member of the Group 63. He published his first book, *Hilarotragoedia*, in 1964. After that, he wrote at least twenty novels, one of the most famous being *Dall'inferno* in 1985. He was only translated into French in 1985.

*Antonio Tabucchi (1943-)*

Tabucchi is a traveller (Europe, South America, India, China), a specialist of Portuguese literature, and translates Fernando Pessoa's work into Italian. He also teaches comparative literature at the University of Siena and writes articles for *L'unità* and *El País*.

*Andrea De Carlo (1952-)*

De Carlo was born in Milan, but he lived in the United States and in Australia for some time. When he returned to Italy, he took interest in literature and cinema (he even collaborated with Fellini and Antonioni). He is also a painter and a photographer.

### 1.5. The young generation

In the 1990s, many young authors published in Italy and their works were subsequently translated into French. Their work clearly differs from that of the previous generations in many respects. Firstly, this is due to the prevalence of an emerging genre, the detective stories. It was previously underrepresented (and underestimated), and exploded in the 1990s. Among the twenty-one authors most published in France, Andrea Camilleri is the only exponent of this new genre. He is an exceptional case because of his age. He was born in 1925, however, he started to write narrative fiction very late in life, after a long career of script-writing for theatre and television. Younger authors, such as Carlo Lucarelli, who published nine titles in France, or Marcello Fois (eight books, five titles), are also quite successful. Here the choice of the period is problematic to the extent that many young authors gained success after Paris Book Fair in March 2002, where

Italy was guest of honour. Niccolo' Ammaniti, for instance, whose latest book *Je n'ai pas peur* (Grasset, 2002) was rather successful (after three days of the fair it went out of print). Another characteristic of the new generation is the importance of regionalism, which is sometimes emphasized through the use of dialect. For instance, Camilleri and Montesano (Sicily), De Luca (Naples), Lucarelli (Bologna) and Fois (Sardinia). The stories are anchored in the regional reality, and at times they adopt an almost anthropological perspective.

Only two of these authors are part of the twenty-one authors mentioned above. It is clear that the choice of the corpus presents an obvious bias, as we are comparing the publications of authors who first published at the beginning of the century with that of young writers who started in the 1990s. However, it gives an idea of the evolution in the translations of Italian books into French. As far as the young generation is concerned, only Camilleri and Tamaro (along with De Luca and Lucarelli, with nine titles) can be included in this group.

*Andrea Camilleri (1925-)*

Camilleri had a long career as a theatre director and a script writer for radio and television. He also wrote lots of poems and short stories. In recent years he has become quite famous for his novels, written in a language which is a mixture of Italian and Sicilian, and takes place in a small imaginary Sicilian city called Vigatà. Half of his works are historical novels on the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the other half are about Detective Montalbano.

*Susanna Tamaro (1957-)*

Tamaro studied cinema and directed scientific documentaries for the television. After her first novel in 1989, she wrote short stories, tales for children, and an international best-seller, *Va dove ti porta il cuore*, in 1994, adapted for cinema by Cristina Comencini in 1996. Since then, she has written fictions and essays, defending religious and family values. She also writes a column for *Famiglia cristiana*.

*Erri De Luca (1950-)*

De Luca was born in Naples, but studied at the French school in Rome. In the 1970s he was an active extreme left-wing militant at *Lotta continua* and travelled in France, Italy and Africa. He worked as a messenger, a workman for Fiat, a lorry driver and finally, a mason, which he still does in order to "preserve his freedom". At the same time, he published novels and learnt Hebrew to study the Bible. He is one of the most popular figures of literary Italy today.

*Carlo Lucarelli (1960-)*

Lucarelli is from the Emilia region. He was one of the young "cannibals" in 1996, and went on to write detective stories. He presently teaches literature at Baricco's Holden school in Turin and also works for cinema and television.

In 2002, at the occasion of the Paris' book fair at which Italy was principal guest, several journals contained special issues on Italian literature. The *Magazine littéraire* (n.407, March 2002) opens

with a presentation of the "young cannibals" such as Niccolò Ammaniti, Aldo Nove, Sandro Dazieri, Andrea Pinketts and Carlo Lucarelli. The name "cannibals" comes from a compilation of short stories released in 1996 in Italy under the title *Gioventù cannibale* (Cannibal Youth). The authors were all approximately 30 years old and only a few of the authors continue to pursue their literary career. The book, initially called *Spaghetti Splatter* and published by Einaudi, was a significant event in the Italian editorial landscape, and it is often referred to in the critiques as a turning point: there is a "before" and an "after" cannibals. The second article is called "La nouvelle vague du sud" (The new wave from the south) and introduces authors such as Erri De Luca, Giuseppe Montesano, Gabriele Frasca, Bruno Arpaia or Maurizio Braucci, who all come from Southern Italy. Then, a double-page interview of Umberto Eco presenting his last novel *Baudolino*, followed by a long article on the revival of the "polar" (detective novels).<sup>1</sup> The main figures are Andrea Camilleri, Marcello Fois and Carlo Lucarelli (who stems from the cannibals generation). After this, a two-page interview with Antonio Tabucchi and a four-page article on Italian intellectuals, presenting Sciascia, Pasolini, Moravia, Calvino and Levi as the five figures that dominated the Italian literature of the twentieth century. Then, there is an interview with Cesare Garboli, one of the most important Italian literary critiques, a longer article on female writers and one on the classics. Finally, there are a few thematic articles on contemporary Italy (such as philosophy, democracy, political issues), and the presentation of the most important authors expected to be at the fair.

This presentation is completely representative of the evolution of the image of Italian literature in France from the beginning of the 1980s. The French public has increasingly discovered the young writers as they became famous in Italy. Whereas there was a difference between the date of publication of an Italian novel and its French translation before the 1980s, this difference tends to be decreasing. At the same time, most of the Italian classics that were never translated into French have been discovered by French publishers in the past two decades.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, there are two observations to be added in answer to the question "who is translated/published?", features which are somehow important in the evolution of the introduction of Italian literature in France. Firstly, many authors of the first three generations have been close to the world of cinema, at some point or another. This is the case with Pasolini and Soldati, of course, but also with others such as Savinio, Malerba and De Carlo, which can be explained by the fact that Italian cinema was widely diffused in France up until the 1970s, and

<sup>1</sup> The word "polar" is difficult to translate from French as it includes dark literature, thrillers and detective stories. In Italian, its equivalent is "giallo".

<sup>2</sup> We will come back later to the role of a generation of Franco-Italian intellectuals in this process.

had strong connexions with French cinema. The 1960s and 1970s were the golden years of Italian cinema. It was highly diverse and ranged from Antonioni's intellectual films to westerns. Cinecittà in Rome was one of the biggest studios in the world. Besides, the success of the novel *The Name of the Rose* was strongly relayed by Jean-Jacques Annaud's adaptation for the cinema in 1986. Up until the 1980s, there was a strong link between Italian literature and cinema in France, that formed part of the intellectual exchange between the two countries and which was reinforced by the political connections at that time. During the 1970s and 1980s, many Italian intellectuals went to France for trips that varied in length from short trips to lengthy periods of exile, and this led to the development of intellectual networks between the two countries which connected, among others, various writers and artists – especially those working in films. This leads us to our second observation: many Italian writers lived abroad at some point, and often in France (among others, Calvino, Tabucchi, De Luca or De Carlo). Here again we understand the importance of the intellectual networks that link the two countries.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, these writers were successful in France, but also in Italy; it is almost as if the stay in France was part of a transnational training in "humanities", undergone by French and Italian travellers in previous centuries. These writers get to know French culture from the inside before returning to Italy – with the exception of those who stay in France – with additional (and original) cultural luggage.

It is interesting to note that these two features, albeit they characterized part of the who were most published in France in the last two decades, does not regard the young generation.<sup>2</sup> This provides evidence that suggests a change in the nature of the connection between the two countries, and which confirms the recent shift of images highlighted in Chapter 2. It also testifies to a recent evolution of Italian literature: a rupture between the young authors and previous generations, a fact that the former are conscious of and define themselves in relation to. Evidently, their trajectories are different, and their relations with the French intellectual diverge from those of previous generations of Italian writers.

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the following chapter is dedicated to these networks.

<sup>2</sup> There are a few exceptions, such as Antonio Tabucchi who lives partly in Paris, but he is more connected to Portugal than to France. There are still Italian intellectuals and writers living in France, such as Cesare Battisti, but not among the ones most successful.

## 2. THE TRANSLATORS: A VARIETY OF SITUATIONS

### 2.1. Variety of characterizations

There are around four hundred translators in total.<sup>1</sup> Nine of them translated between twenty and forty books on the period, twenty-four have translated between ten and twenty, forty-four between five and ten, and the rest have translated less than five.

*Table 4.3. What do the translators translate, how much and for whom?*

Translator	Number titles 1982-2001	Author(s)	% of titles	Publisher(s)	% of books	Number of prefaces
De Ceccatty René	40	Moravia 5 Pasolini 7 <i>Total</i>	12.5 17.5 <u>30</u>	Flammarion 8 Gallimard 7 Payot& Rivages 7 <i>Total</i>	16.7 14.6 14.6 <u>45.9</u>	1
Pozzoli Marguerite	39	Tamara 8 Messina 5 <i>Total</i>	20.5 12.8 <u>33.3</u>	Actes Sud 20	<u>40.8</u>	0
Bacelli Monique	37	Fenoglio 5 Landolfi 4 <i>Total</i>	13.5 10.8 <u>24.3</u>	Allia 10 Fosse aux ours 5 Gallimard 5 <i>Total</i>	25 12.5 12.5 <u>50</u>	1
Manganaro Jean-Paul	36	Calvino 9	25	Seuil 29 Gallimard 13 <i>Total</i>	56.8 25.5 <u>82.3</u>	0
Bauer Nathalie	30	Soldati 5	16.6	Seuil 10	<u>31.3</u>	2
Brun Françoise	28	Loy 7 Baricco 6 <i>Total</i>	25 21.4 <u>46.4</u>	Payot& Rivages 10 Albin Michel 6 <i>Total</i>	25 15 <u>40</u>	0
Quadruppani Serge	27	Camilleri 8 Evangelisti 5 <i>Total</i>	29.6 18.5 <u>48.1</u>	Métailié 10 Fleuve Noir 8 <i>Total</i>	28.6 22.9 <u>51.5</u>	1
Schifano Jean-Noël	22	Sciascia 5 Eco 4 <i>Total</i>	22.7 18.2 <u>40.9</u>	Grasset 10 Gallimard 9 <i>Total</i>	31.3 28.2 <u>59.5</u>	2
Aghion Soula	20	<i>14 different authors</i>		Payot& Rivages 4 Le Promeneur 4 <i>Total</i>	18.2 18.2 <u>36.4</u>	0

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to give an exact number as many books are translated by two or more people, which makes it difficult to count the total number of individuals involved.



Bouchard François	18	Pontiggia 4 Bontempelli 3 <i>Total</i>	22.2 16.7 <u>38.9</u>	Bourgois 3 Corti 3 <i>Total</i>	17.6 17.6 <u>35.2</u>	1
Breitman Michel	18	Buzzati 10	55.6	Robert Laffont 9	<u>39.1</u>	1
Darmon Maurice	17	Sciascia 6 Verga 4 <i>Total</i>	35.3 23.5 <u>58.8</u>	Gallimard 5 Fayard 4 <i>Total</i>	25 20 <u>45</u>	0
Sarrabayrouse Alain	17	14 different authors		Fayard 5	27.8	2
Valin Danièle	16	De Luca 9	56.3	Payot& Rivages 15	75	1
Fusco Mario	16	Sciascia 8	50	Gallimard 5	27.8	5
Stragliati Roland	15	Scerbanenco 9	60	10-18 10	55.6	0
Arnaud Michel	15	Pavese 3	20	Gallimard 12	70.6	0

*Legend:*

Under 30%

Between 30 and 50%

**Over 50%**

This table shows that sixteen people who translated at least fifteen books during the period. For each author, it shows the top three authors who have been most translated, and the top three publishers who have edited most of the books translated. The authors – and publishers – who clearly stood out in the list by translator have been indicated, hence, the fact that there is often only one author – publisher –, and at other times there are two or three. It also gives an idea of the level of specialisation of the translators. We have identified three levels: non-specialists, that is to say that the author(s) most translated represent less than 30% of the total of the titles translated (all the same, the publisher(s) for whom the translator worked usually edited less than 30% of the books translated); specialised, when these values are between 30 and 50%; and finally, very specialised, over 50% of the books or titles.

Valin and Stragliati are the only two translators who are very specialised both for the authors that they translated and also for the publishers that they worked for. Stragliati translated nine of Scerbanenco's fourteen novels that were published in France, among which twelve were published by 10-18. Valin translated all of De Luca's nine novels published in France, first by Verdier, then by Payot & Rivages, and finally by Gallimard. In this case, the author's books were translated by the same individual. Another example of this exclusivity is Baricco, as Françoise Brun translated six of his seven novels, which were first published by Albin Michel, then in various pocket collections. Some translators work exclusively for one author, even though for

they may be edited by different publishers: for instance, half of the books translated by Mario Fusco are by Leonardo Sciascia; Breitman translated over 50% of Buzzati's books and this was also the case with Darmon with respects to Sciascia and Verga. In the above cases, the authors have no exclusivity, as seen in the case of Sciascia: two translators mostly worked on his books, but he has been translated by thirteen people in total. Many translators are faithful to a publishing house rather than to an author. The most striking examples of this are Michel Arnaud (70% of the books that he translated have been published by Gallimard), similarly, Jean-Paul Manganaro works almost exclusively for Seuil and Gallimard. Other examples include Marguerite Pozzoli, who works for Actes Sud, Serge Quadruppani for Métailié and Fleuve Noir and Jean-Noël Schifano for Grasset and Gallimard. It can be noted than this fidelity is often shown towards large publishers with high symbolic prestige (as opposed to economic), such as Gallimard, Grasset and Seuil. Finally, there are some translators who tend not to translate many books by the same author: Alain Sarrabayrouse and Soula Aghion have translated fourteen different authors (out of seventeen and twenty titles, respectively), and Nathalie Bauer's "specialisation", Soldati, only represents 16% of the titles that she has translated.

It is clear from the preceding analysis that the nature of the books translated and the publishers for whom translators work are extremely diverse. Some of them specialise on one author and always work for the same publisher, whereas others do not follow a discernable pattern. This phenomenon could be related to the idea of networks that will be developed in the next chapter. If a translator can work without being tied to a particular publishing house, it not only means that he has enough contacts to ensure that he gets new contracts, but also that the people who are involved in the publication process (and therefore who choose the translator) are aware of those who are available within the market, either directly or by reputation. This is reinforced by the fact that most translators who only work for one publishing house do not survive on their income from translations alone, but instead they have other activities. In this respect, they are less inserted into the translation market. Finally, it should be emphasized that his diversity can be related to the heterogeneity of the translators in terms of their qualification and type of work (do they have another occupation, such as an academic, a director of collection, a publisher or a critic? What percentage of their time is dedicated to translation?). There are no uniform situations for translators, either in terms of their personal career or in terms of relations with the other members of the field.

## 2.2. Where does this diversity come from?

We can make two observations to explain this variety: first, we can assume that it reflects the fact that there is no prior system of importation of Italian literature; the networks that were active until the 1980s were very restricted and mainly composed with academics and publishers' acquaintances.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the quality of the translations was not always good.

"On ne peut pas connaître moyennement une langue et prétendre la traduire, ou alors il faut être génial comme Baudelaire traduisant Poe, mais ça n'arrive pas tous les jours, c'est même le cas contraire. Alors, souvent, la traduction a été le fait de personnes plus ou moins nanties dans la société, qui s'adonnaient à une espèce de travail à côté, comme si on faisait de la broderie, ou du crochet, ou du tricot... ce qui est quand même dangereux, à la fois pour le marché des prix, si vous voulez, aussi pour ce que ça donne comme résultat pour la traduction... et donc, je crois qu'il faut prendre conscience du côté extrêmement technique du travail du traducteur. Il suffit pas d'avoir une âme poétique, d'être porté pour les choses littéraires, pour faire un traducteur. Il y a aussi toute une série de techniques qui sont plus ou moins éprouvées, qu'on connaît plus ou moins." (Claude Muccino)

This idea of "travail à côté" is an indirect reference to the fact that translations were often given to the wives of publishers or heads of collections, for whom it was a way of gaining some kind of intellectual status. However, most translators denounce the quality of their work and assert that the younger generations of translators have a far better knowledge of Italian language and culture.

"En ce qui concerne la qualité des traductions, je crois qu'on peut dire aussi une chose, c'est que depuis 20-25 ans à peu près, le niveau moyen des traductions s'est beaucoup amélioré. Pour diverses raisons. Peut-être parce qu'on a publié plus de choses. Peut-être parce qu'on a fait appel à des gens plus compétents. Peut-être parce qu'un certain nombre de lecteurs, soit professionnels, je parle des critiques, soit lecteurs de base, ont de l'Italie une connaissance directe plus large. Voyages, vacances, etc. C'est un phénomène dont on ne peut pas ne pas tenir compte. Le fait est que l'exigence est plus grande et qu'on ne mettrait plus en circulation maintenant des traductions comme on en a vu, je parle pas des années 1930, même dans les années 1950-1960. Alors, ce que j'appelais des traductions de femmes du monde (elle me pardonneront), mais je veux dire des gens qui n'étaient pas particulièrement motivés... non, motivés c'est un autre problème, mais qui n'étaient pas particulièrement formés, qualifiés sur le plan linguistique ou culturel, pour donner effectivement des traductions fiables. Je crois que de ce point de vue là il y a un progrès qualitatif qui est indéniable." (Marco Guglielmi)

*"Tout à l'heure vous me disiez que les traductions des années 1950 et 60 étaient désastreuses, c'est à quel niveau?"*

Du manque de précision, du manque de rigueur. Je crois, en fait... vous en parlerez avec Fortunato.... ce qui a aidé la littérature italienne à démarrer dans les années 1980, c'est qu'il y a eu toute une génération de traducteurs très rigoureux, qui prenaient pas la traduction pour un jeu... qui disaient pas, bon, si on phrase pose problème, on la coupe... ça c'est ce qui se passait à l'époque, carrément... Et donc, vraiment quelque chose de très proche du texte, et je suis sûre que ça a aidé la littérature italienne à percer, parce qu'il y a vraiment eu un engagement de rigueur, qui faisait suite à toutes ces années de... de n'importe quoi! (...)

<sup>1</sup> In this regard, several interviewees told me the same anecdote: the wife of one of the biggest Parisian publishers of Italian literature had translated several novels, and her Italian was so weak that most of these books are retranslated now. Of course, no one dared tell the publisher, who kept on giving her books to translate. According to the people who told me this story, it is symptomatic of the way things worked until the 1980s.

Il y avait pas cette rigueur qu'après la génération des traducteurs des années 1980 ont apporté. C'était pas un vrai métier. C'était un truc de femme à la maison, mais c'était pas un vrai métier. Alors que maintenant, c'est quand même... Bon, on n'est pas beaucoup à ne vivre que de ça, moi je suis une des rares traductrices qui ne vit que de ça... Mais c'est considéré comme un métier, c'est vraiment un interlocuteur pour l'éditeur."

(Laure Fougère)

"Bon, ça, les traducteurs sont de mieux en mieux, parce que, si vous voulez, il n'y a plus ce qu'il y a eu pendant longtemps, des dames oisives qui savaient vaguement l'Italien et qui traduisaient... et puis, quand vous leur parliez vous vous aperceviez qu'elles ne savaient pas parler italien, c'était un peu effrayant. Mais bon, c'est plus ça. Maintenant, les gens sont des gens qui sont à moitié en Italie, ils sont bilingues. Vous voyez, ce type de profil devient plus fréquent, des gens qui connaissent parfaitement la culture, la civilisation, le mode de vie, s'ils lisent des romans avec des références à la télévision, à la vie quotidienne, ils savent de quoi... ils savent de quoi ça parle."

(Paul Darlignac)

These pieces confirm the idea that there was a shift in the quality of translations that corresponded to the arrival of a new generation of translators; this shift coincided with the increase of the number of translations in the 1980s. Suddenly more translators were needed; on the one hand, the quality of their work was undeniable, because they usually had a better knowledge of both the cultural and the technical aspects of it. On the other hand, as there were no definite circuits of education, they sometimes came from unexpected places:

"Il y en a beaucoup qui se sont improvisés. Ça m'embête de donner des noms. Comme ils ont vu que la littérature italienne, ça marchait, il y a beaucoup de traducteurs qui se sont improvisés traducteurs de l'italien, qui traduisaient... je veux pas que vous retrouviez les noms des personnes, mais disons, qui traduisaient d'une façon amateuriale des textes, et qui tout à coup on vu que l'italianisme marchait, et qui se sont précipités dans les wagons. Qui n'avaient aucune formation, et qui ont fait des traductions qui sont peut-être beaucoup, d'ailleurs, des traductions approximatives, dès les années 1980..." (Jean-Charles Zallio)

This interviewee is less positive about the increasing quality of the work, but he raises an interesting point: that of a possible opportunism of certain translators, who profited from the 1980s boom and the new space created on the market. They exercised various activities (lecturers at the university, correctors for publishing houses, students...), but they had in common the will to enter the field of publishing. This also explains why the socio-professional characteristics of the translators are so diverse.

The second observation that helps understanding this diversity pertains to the low degree of institutionalisation of this profession. First, it comes from the absence of institutions of education, even though there is a recent awareness of this amongst the field of specialists.

"Il y avait une époque où n'importe qui traduisait de l'italien de façon approximative. Ça, aujourd'hui, c'est fini. Il y a quand même malheureusement encore des exceptions, et là c'est un problème de formation des traducteurs.

*Et ça s'est amélioré grâce à quoi ?*

Et bien, il y a quand même eu, de façon globale, une amélioration de l'enseignement des langues. Se sont mis en place dans les universités, là il faudrait voir au niveau des différentes universités, dater par exemple la mise en place des formations à la traduction... mais il y en a beaucoup plus qu'avant. Il y a quand même une époque où, je prends que l'exemple de l'italien, les traductions n'étaient pas du tout valorisées ... il y en avait au concours, certes, mais une toute petite partie. Certes, aujourd'hui ça reste le cas, mais aujourd'hui on peut, quand on est étudiant de langues, accéder à des formations de DESS, et les nouveaux masters qu'on est en train de mettre en place... bon, plusieurs universités ont réfléchi à la mise en place de masters de traduction, il y a des écoles de traduction qui ont ouvert la voie, les grandes écoles comme l'ESIT ou celle de Bruxelles, qui ont montré un certain chemin... Et en littérature on a commencé à se dire qu'il serait peut-être bon de faire ça aussi."

(Danièle Perrineau)

"Et là il y a eu un certain nombre d'acteurs professionnels, bon, les traducteurs professionnels, l'ATLF, les centres de traduction littéraire... bon, tout ça a fait que quelques universités ont commencé à se dire qu'il faudrait mettre tout ça en mouvement. Et donc, je crois que ça... et puis, il y a une augmentation de l'exigence de qualité, qui est je crois générale. Culturellement parlant, en vrac, on est beaucoup plus exigeants qu'il y a trente ans."

(Delphine Vasseur)

The newness of this concern for the education of translators confirms that it was not an issue until today. This can be explained by the fact that, within the literary world, translation is not always considered as important in the creation of a book, at least for the public.

"Dans le *Magazine Littéraire*, toujours, pour ne citer qu'eux, mais enfin là ça fait scandale et il y a de quoi, ils ont quand même trouvé le moyen de faire l'ensemble du dossier sans citer un seul nom de traducteur. Ils ont mis une petite note en bas du premier article en disant, vu l'importance des notes, nous ne mettrons pas les noms des traducteurs. Ce sont les seuls qui se sont permis de faire ça, c'est scandaleux. Bon, évidemment, l'association des traducteurs littéraires a protesté, mais le mal était fait. Et ça c'est quand même aussi un manque de sérieux assez catastrophique quand on s'occupe de faire le point sur la présence d'une littérature étrangère dans un certain pays. Il me semble que là, la coïncidence de savoir qui a traduit quoi est pas innocente pour le lecteur."

(Danièle Perrineau)

Translation is an activity which in a sense has little symbolic value, especially because it is not very visible.<sup>1</sup> It is as if the public was not always aware of the fact that the books they are reading have been transformed and made readable to them. Moreover, within the field of translations, Italian also lacks symbolic value: whereas the competition for translating English literature is tough, and the translators from English are thus considered highly competent, there is no real competition for Italian, and therefore less esteem for the Italian translators.

Overall, the recent increase in translations from Italian, the absence of a proper education system for translators combined with the fact that Italian translations have little symbolic value explain

<sup>1</sup> In a figurative sense (translators are not members of publishing houses, their relations with the publishers are often limited to exchanges of emails) and in the literal sense (the name of the translator does not always stand on the book cover).

the variety of the situations the translators find themselves in that we highlighted from the analysis of the corpus of Italian novels published in France in the last two decades.

### 3. THE PUBLISHERS

#### 3.1. Who are the publishers?

Before considering the publishers as actors of the field in question, we firstly need to define what is a publisher. More concretely, is he or she the head of the publishing house, the head of a collection or someone else? There are two ways of understanding the world of publishing. In a rather abstract sense, publication is the act of making something available to a public. In this respect, it is result of the combined action of all of the members of a publishing house. However, it is also, more concretely, an ensemble of actions (choice, translation in the case of foreign books, production of the book and diffusion). In this case the publisher is the person who coordinates the various steps that precede the launch of the book. Consequently, as soon as the publishing house employs more than one or two people, we can assume that a significant part of the publishers' task concerns management. He has access to various pieces of information (such as which books are released in Italy, which translators are available, what are the technical constraints) and he is responsible for coordinating the whole process. The flows of information are heterogeneous by definition, as they are not centralised and possible to quantify, and therefore part of the publisher's duties is to manage this heterogeneous flow of information.

The interviews for this research were usually carried out with the head of a publishing house (big or small), the head of a collection or the person responsible for foreign literature in a big publishing house. Furthermore, it should be noted that the existence of collections is a feature of the French editorial system. It has been developed in other countries (such as Italy) but it is much less widespread in the Anglo-Saxon publishing world. In a sense, collections are also actors in the field that we are looking at, insofar as they influence the choice of books. This point will be elaborated upon in the next chapter, which will be dedicated to the mechanisms of publication.

The preceding section aimed to show that the entity that we refer to as 'publishers' is not uniform. Within the same publishing house, there are diverse ways of choosing books. However, as the name of the publishing house is always displayed on the book, the reader is influenced by this label. From this perspective, it makes sense to look at Italian novels that were published in France by publishing house.

In total, there are 1,550 books in our corpus, that were published by 184 different publishers, who published between 1 and 201 books each between 1982 and 2001. The two "biggest" publishers – that is to say, those who published the most books – are Gallimard (201 books) and le Seuil (137). Jointly, they published 21.8% of the total number of books released during this period. The following eight published between 40 and 79 books, which constituted 27.8% of the publications,<sup>1</sup> the following nine between 20 and 39 (14.5% of the total),<sup>2</sup> and the following 14 between 10 and 19 (12.6% of the total).<sup>3</sup> This means that thirty-three publishers are responsible for 1,189 books, which represents more than three quarters of the corpus. Among the rest of the publishers, 24 published between 5 and 9 books (11.6% of the total) and 127 published less than 5 (13%). These 151 publishers (82% of the total) were responsible for only one quarter of all the books released.

### 3.2. The most active thirty-three publishers between 1982 and 2001

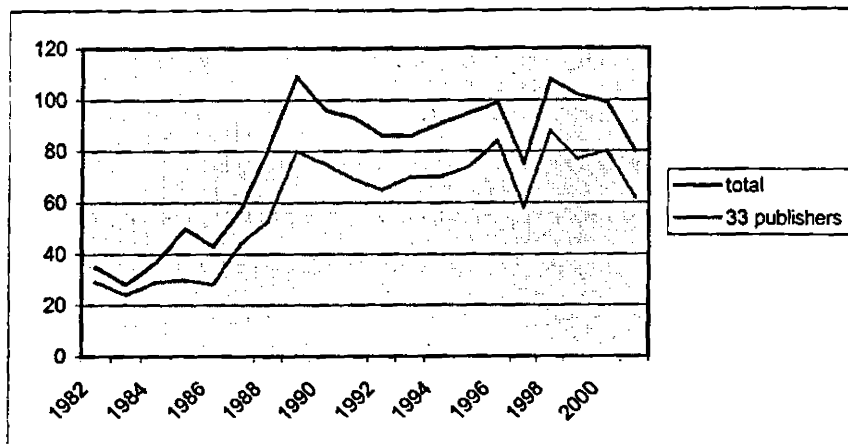
The focus of this section will be on the first thirty-three publishing houses (18% of the total), whose publications (1,189 books in total) represent more than three quarters of the corpus (76.7%). They all published at least ten Italian novels during this period, which means at least one every second year in average. This choice is by definition arbitrary – why do we not focus on the forty-nine publishers who published 1,309 books (84% of the total)? Our aim is to illustrate the general trends in the introduction of Italian literature in France, and we thus assume that the choice of these 33 publishers is justified if we compare the evolution of the publications of these 33 publishers to that of the total number of the publishers, the curves are parallel, as shows the following graph

<sup>1</sup> Payot & Rivages (79), Librairie Générale Française (76), 10-18 (56), Christian Bourgois (48), Flammarion (45), Grasset (45), Actes Sud (42) and Fayard (40). It should be remembered that these figures include the re-editions, namely the publications of all of the different versions of the same text (for instance, new translations, pocket editions), but excludes the reprints.

<sup>2</sup> Verdier (35), Pocket (27), Robert Laffont (26), Albin Michel (25), Denoël (25), Allia (23), Mille et une nuits (22), Le Promeneur (21), Le grand livre du mois (20).

<sup>3</sup> Anne-Marie Métailié (19), Liana Levi (18), Chantal Desjonquères (17), Plon (17), Hachette (15), Stock (15), POL (14), Fleuve Noir (13), Julliard (13), France Loisirs (12), La fosse aux Ours (12), J'ai Lu (11), Ombres (10), Quai Voltaire (10).

Graph 4.1. Number of books published on the period in total and by the 33 first publishers.



At the end of the period, the curves are not exactly parallel (and this is also the case if we compare them to the curve for the nineteen first publishers). The total declines gradually, whereas the sub-totals have a clear gap around 1998-1999. This means that, at that time, some "small" publishers (in the sense of publishers who did not publish many Italian books during the period) published more Italian novels than usual. It is exactly the same for the period from 1984 to 1985: if these two sub-periods represent "mini booms", this would mean that the small publishers developed a short-term interest in Italian literature.

In order to understand the reasons for the increase, the following issues will be addressed: did all publishers publish more books, or only some of them? Did some start publishing Italian literature during this period? Or were they active beforehand? Did some of them cease to publish Italian material? When did they publish their first Italian book?

The following observations are read from the table presented in Annexe 3. Firstly, five of the publishers were established before the twentieth century, eight between 1900 and the Second world war, thirteen between the war and 1981 and five afterwards (the youngest, La Fosse aux Ours, was created in 1997). Information were not available on the remaining two (Le Promeneur and Ombres). As they were established in different eras, many types of firm can be found, including the old "family houses", such as Grasset or Gallimard, as well as young ones such as Liana Levi or Mille et une nuits.

Secondly, twenty-eight out of thirty-three publishers have their headquarters in Paris (in addition, Verdier and Actes Sud, who settled in the South East of France, also have offices in Paris); 15 are in the "Quartier Latin", that is to say in the 5th, 6th or 7th *arrondissements*.<sup>1</sup> Those in the 13th *arrondissement* are part of the Vivendi Universal Publishing group, which has its offices in

<sup>1</sup> This area is described as the centre of the publishing world in Paris [Hamon and Rotman 1981].



that area. This is the same for those in the 15th *arrondissement*, which belong to Hachette, and for Robert Laffont in the 8th *arrondissement* (seven in total). There are only six publishers located in other parts of the city.

The third observation is that during the period, the number of publications increased for six of the publishers, decreased for three, and remained more or less stable for nine. For the fifteen others, it is difficult to draw any conclusions, as the curve has no unified aspect.

Then, if we look at the highest number of books released by each publisher on an annual basis, we can observe that the classification from higher to lower number more or less follows the classification of the publishers according to the total number of books published between 1982 and 2001 (columns F and J). This means that the level of concentration of the publications is more or less homogeneous. However, there are some exceptions: for Hachette and France-Loisirs, the maximum is higher than expected, which means that their publications tend to be more concentrated in one year. For Grasset, Robert Laffont and POL, the opposite can be observed, as their publications are distributed more homogeneously than the average.

At the same time, the dates of the first publication of an Italian novel are evenly distributed, at least until the beginning of the 1980s: five before 1920, five between 1921 and 1940, four in the 1940s and 1950s and five in the 1960s and 1970s. It is more concentrated afterwards: six between 1982 and 1985, five between 1986 and 1990 four after 1991.

The number of Italian novels published between 1900 and 1981 show that there are big differences in the field of publication before and after 1981. For instance, among the first fifteen publishers for the period 1982-2001, seven had published less than ten books in the previous period (they were all established before 1982). The overall number of publications before 1981 is obviously determined by the date the publisher was set up, but there are some interesting exceptions. For example, Fayard and Rivages published eleven and eight Italian novels, respectively, before 1981, even though they had been set up in 1857 and 1912.

### 3.3. Distribution and diffusion

In the thirty-three publishers in question, six are distributed by Vivendi Universal Publishing (Julliard, Fleuve Noir, Plon, Robert Laffont, Pocket and 10-18), and seven by Hachette (Stock, Hachette, Mille et une nuits, Albin Michel, Fayard, Grasset and Librairie Générale Française). Flammarion has its own distribution system, UD Union, which is also used by Actes Sud and J'ai Lu. It is the same for Le Seuil, which includes Liana Levi, Métailié, Christian Bourgois and Payot & Rivages. La Fosse aux Ours and Allia are distributed by Harmonia Mundi; Gallimard, Verdier,

POL, Le Promeneur and Quai Voltaire by Sodis (which was created by Gallimard at the end of the 1970s). France Loisirs and Le Grand Livre du Mois have their own circuits, and Chantal Desjonquères is distributed by the Presses Universitaires de France. This means that thirteen out of thirty-two publishers (the data is not available for Ombres) are distributed by Hachette or VUP, the two groups that have been progressively taking control of the French publishing world since the beginning of the 1980s. *"Détenant plus de 55% du marché français du livre, lorgnant sans cesse sur les derniers indépendants d'importance – Gallimard et Albin Michel essentiellement, parce que le Seuil apparaît momentanément inattaquable et que Flammarion est entré, en 2000, dans le groupe Rizzoli-Corriere della Sera – les deux géants français ont fait accomplir à l'édition nationale une évolution comparable à celle des Etats-Unis, même si la concentration y est plus gigantesque encore, de l'ordre de 80% des parts de marché"* (Mollier, 2002: 36).

Since its creation in 1925, Hachette has progressively expanded, buying several publishing houses such as Hetzel in 1914, Pierre Laffitte in 1916, the Pléiade in 1930 and then Grasset in 1954, Fayard in 1958, Stock in 1961 or Le livre de Poche (Librairie générale française). In December 1980, when Jean-Luc Lagardère (head of the Matra group) bought 41% of the stock options of the company, it came as a real shock for all the publishing world, as it signalled the end of the domination of the Hachette family<sup>1</sup> (Reynaud, 1999). In May 1981, the adoption of a restructuring plan led to the suppression of over 400 employments. In 2000, Lagardère's turnover was 12 billion euro, among which Hachette Livres represents only 0.83 billion, that is to say 7% of the total.<sup>2</sup>

Five of the 33 publishers we are dealing with belong, at least partly, to Hachette:

- Librairie Générale Française (99% of the capital)
- Librairie Arthème Fayard, since 1958, (99% of the capital)
- Editions Stock, since 1961, 99% of the capital
- Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, since 1954, 85% of the capital
- Hachette Livres.

Moreover, Hachette also owns stock options of other publishers: De Fallois, Didier, Numéro un, Fasquelle, Foucher, Harlequin, Calmann-Lévy, Hatier, Hazan, Istra, Lattès, Le Chêne, Le Masque, Marabout, Pluriel and Rageot. It is also in charge of

<sup>1</sup> They were no longer the majority shareholder and it was divided into 1.7 millions stock options in 1980, but remained part of the directorate until 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Livres Hebdo*, 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2001.

the diffusion and distribution of Albin Michel,<sup>1</sup> Humanoïdes associés, Dupuis, Glénat and Tallandier.

The other activities of the group relating to publicity include (Brémond, 2002: 80):

- Newspapers: the Hachette-Philipacchi Media, 200 titles in 33 countries.

Radio: Europe-1, Europe-2, RFM...

- Television: Participation in CanalSatellite, Multi-thématique

- Internet: Club-Internet, Lagardère.net, Elle.fr, pariscscope.fr

- Cinema: Hachette première

- Photo: Gamma, Rapho, Hoa-Qui, Keystone

The company moved into a modern and functional building in the 15<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* of Paris,<sup>2</sup> after the sale of the historical buildings of the Boulevards Saint-Michel and Saint-Germain where it had been based since its foundation. This had strong symbolic consequences, according to Mollier (2002: 48): *"Le groupe Hachette-Livre est alors apparu comme un trésor au sein du pôle communication de Matra-Hachette, dont la fonction était d'amortir certains chocs financiers d'opérations hasardeuses. Le mythe de l'entreprise culturelle s'est évanoui pour plusieurs années, avant un nouveau réenchâtement actuellement en œuvre, même si les éditeurs de certaines branches culturelles du groupe en jugent la structure trop hiérarchique et ne leur laissant qu'une faible marge de manœuvre, et donc peu de possibilités d'innover et de prendre les risques inhérents au métier du livre"*.

This is important from our perspective, as it will help us to understand if the publishers' editorial lines are influenced by the fact that they are owned by the group. In 1988, a few years after Hachette was bought by Lagardère, the Groupe de la Cité became the first book empire in France, buying Larousse-Le Robert-Nathan, and then the Dalloz-Sirey group in 1989, Robert Laffont in 1990, and finally, Fixot in 1993. More recently, it has made an alliance with Bertelsmann in Germany in the form of the most important book club, France Loisirs. The complex steps of the constitution of the Vivendi Universal Publishing have been well articulated by Mollier (2002: 49): *"Le groupe Vivendi Universal Publishing actuel (...) prend la suite du groupe Havas Publications Edition, qui est lui-même issu du Groupe de la Cité (GdC), qui à son tour résulte d'un accord, en février 1988, entre la Générale occidentale, filiale à 100% d'Alcatel-Alsthom, et CEP Communication, filiale à 44% de Havas. L'accord se traduit par la constitution paritaire (50/50) de la holding Hoche Friedland, qui détient 68% du capital du Groupe de la*

<sup>1</sup> *Le livre de poche* is owned by a partnership between Hachette and Albin Michel for.

<sup>2</sup> It took place after the failure of the fifth television channel, which is also the property of the Hachette group.

*cit , le reste  tant d tenu par Havas (7%) et dives groupes financiers (...). La G n rale occidentale apporte les activit s des Presses de la cit : Fleuve Noir, Rouge et or, Editions Solar, Presses Pocket, Librairie acad mique Perrin, Plon, Julliard, Chrisitian Bourgois, les  ditions 10/18, Bordas (rachet e   Parigas en 1985) avec ses marques Dunod et Gauthier-Villars ainsi que les  ditions Olivier Orban acquises en 1987. De son cot , CEP Communication apporte le groupe Larousse-Nathan avec les filiales de chacune des deux maisons. Mais, depuis cette fusion de 1988, le groupe s'est transform  par des rachats de certaines autres maisons ou par la cession de certains actifs. On citera, principalement, la prise de contr le de Privat   Toulouse (1988), le rachat de l' diteur britannique Chambers (1989), celui de Dalloz (1989) et l'absorption de Laffont (1990)."*

In the 1990s, various changes were made, and in 1995 the situation could be described as follows: CEP owned 100% of the GdC and Havas owned 73.2% of the CEP. In September 1997, CEP became Havas Publications Editions (HPE), part of the worldwide group Vivendi. Vivendi Universal Publishing (VUP) was formally established in May 1998.

Vivendi Universal Publishing currently owns six of the thirty-three publishers: 10-18, Julliard, Fleuve Noir, Laffont, Plon and Pocket. In total, it owns approximately sixty publishing houses, such as Armand Colin, Belfond, Berlitz, Bordas, Bouquins, Dalloz, Dunod, La D couverte, Fixot, Harrap, Larousse, Masson, Nathan, Nil editions, Orban, Perrin, Presses de la Cit , Presses de la Renaissance, Le Robert, Seghers and Vidal. More generally, its media activities are very diversified (Br mond, 2002: 79):

- Newspapers: l'Express, l'Expansion, la Vie financi re, l'Etudiant, Lire
- Distribution-Diffusion: Vivendi Universal Publishing Services
- Internet: education.com, MP3.com, 01net.com, 18h.com, bonjour.fr
- Telephone: C g tel, SFR
- TeLevision: Canal Plus, and twenty-five channels in fourteen countries
- Cinema: UGC, Universal Studio
- Music: Universal Music (Seagram).

It appears that the structure of the publishing world of Italian novels in France quite reflects the structure of the French editorial field overall. The two groups Hachette and VUP have a very strong presence, and coexist with a few independent publishers such as Gallimard and Seuil. The publishers belonging to (or distributed by) Hachette and VUP have released a total of 399 books

during the period, which is exactly one third of the books published by the thirty-three most active publishers. The houses which depend directly or indirectly on Gallimard and Seuil (that is to say, distributed by Seuil or Sodis) have published 607 books altogether, which represents 51% of the total. Flammarion is an exceptional case, as it was bought by the Italian group Rizzoli-Corriere della sera in 2000: however, the publishers distributed by UD Union represent 8.2% of the total number of books released (98 books).

In the case of Italian literature between 1982 and 2001, these results show that there is, in quantitative terms, the independent houses are dominant. However, a methodological problem should be noted as most of the publishers that belong to Hachette and VUP joined the groups during the 1990s. These figures would make more sense from 2000 onwards, as this was the last time a firm joined VUP.<sup>1</sup>

The period we are looking at corresponds with that of the progressive transformation of the French editorial system (Reynaud, 1999). This is crucial for our understanding of the situation: the fact that the publishing houses depending on big financial groups have published one third of all Italian novels on the period means that there has been a progressive penetration of the market by these houses. It would be interesting to compare these results to the repartition by publishers previously, in order to understand if there are patterns in time. If we look at the period 1900-1982 (source: Valin, 2001), it appears that the list of the 20 first publishers has a lot in common with that of the following two decades: Gallimard and Le Seuil are still in first position, followed by Denoël (3rd position), Albin Michel (4th), Flammarion (5th), Plon (6th), Librairie Générale Française (7th), Laffont (8th), Grasset (14th), Stock (15th), Hachette (16th), Julliard (17th), Fayard (18th) and J'ai Lu (19th). All of these (14 out of 20) are almost the 33 first publishers for the period 1982-2001.<sup>2</sup> The others have either published much less (Calmann-Lévy, that published 5 novels on the period) or stopped published Italian literature (Del Luca, Mondiales,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> If we look at the total number of books released in 2000 and 2001, it can be seen that Gallimard and Seuil edited 43 out of 141 books together, 30% of the total (28% for 1982-2001). Furthermore, Payot & Rivages (distributed by Seuil) published seventeen titles, La Fosse aux Ours (small independent distributed by Harmonia Mundi) published nine and Fleuve Noir (trade mark of VUP, which mainly deals with detective novels) published seven. Altogether, the publishers linked to Seuil and Gallimard published 76 books (54% of the total), and the ones belonging to Hachette and VUP only 35, not even 25% of the total. However, it is difficult to draw any conclusions as Italy was the guest country at the Paris Book Fair in 2002 and this could somehow make the results biased: over 40 books were published just before the fair, which means that the results for 2001 are biased as some publishers waited for the beginning of 2002 to release the novels they had prepared. In addition, many small publishers (independent) took this opportunity to try to launch young Italian authors, because they knew the situation would be open to new talents. This strengthens the idea that the number of Italian novels published by independent publishers in 2000 and 2001 is probably superior than it would have been without this book fair. This brings nuances to the importance of the independent circuit. Moreover, we would need to look at the proportion of the literary books published by independent houses for all foreign literatures, and for French literature, in order to make a comparison.

<sup>2</sup> Payot, one of the most active after 1982, was in 23rd position beforehand.

<sup>3</sup> Mondiales published one book in 1982.

Ollendorff, Juven). Therefore, it is not so much the nature of the repartition that has changed: Gallimard, Le Seuil, but also Flammarion, Grasset, Fayard or Albin Michel, have been active previously. But there are pioneers, such as Calmann-Lévy (first Italian novel published in 1899), Hachette (1900) and Plon (1903). Quite a few publishers started with Italian novels between the two World Wars; Payot (1917), Grasset (1919), Albin Michel (1919), Stock (1923), Flammarion (1923), Gallimard (1927), Denoël (1931) and Fayard (1932). The last four started after 1945: Laffont (1947), Seuil (1951), Librairie Générale Française (1953) and Julliard (1957).<sup>1</sup> Three of the five houses whose activity declined or stopped from the 1980s on were active very early: Calmann-Lévy in 1899, Ollendorff in 1900 and Juven in 1903. They have thus been important actors of the publications of Italian novels at the beginning of the twentieth Century. The other two had a shorter time of activity, as Mondiales released its first Italian novel in 1946 and Del Luca in 1950. In Conclusion, we can say that it is not so much the nature of the repartition that has changed but the structure of the editorial world from the 1980s. Most of the houses that are today distributed by the two financial groups that dominate the French publishing world have had a role in the diffusion of Italian literature in France before the 1980s, and have then kept on being active in this respect. It is interesting to note that the change in the structure of the economic capital of a publishing house thus does not necessarily modify directly the type of foreign literature they translate. However, it might induce changes in the nature of the books chosen, even though coming from the same countries, or on the way of choosing them. This will be our focus in the next chapters.

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All of these results give some indication on the trends in the publications from the perspectives of the authors, the translators and the publishers. These results should only be considered as indications, for two principal reasons. Firstly, it is not possible to avoid human error in this type of descriptive statistics, at least to a certain extent. There were many tasks in the compilation of the corpus, which adds to the possibility of error while copying the data.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the description of a corpus over 1500 books is, by definition, incomplete: it is impossible to account for all of the complexities that would appear in an in-depth analysis. However, the purpose of this chapter was to illustrate of the main trends.

<sup>1</sup> We could look into the details of their Italian publications ever since they started, but unfortunately the data is not reliable enough to compare it with that of the following period.

<sup>2</sup> The software package used (Excel) also had some limitations. For instance, the creation of dynamic crossed tables requires many manipulations and there are not many mechanisms for controlling the data.

In conclusion, two points should be mentioned. Firstly, we have examined two categories of actors – the authors are not seen as actors in the publication process –, and it emerged that the term "publisher" can refer to different realities. Nonetheless, we should mention the existence of other actors, that are not quantifiable. They are all of the people who have a direct or indirect influence on the publication process without necessarily actively participating in the decisions, such as critics, advisors, readers, academics and so on. We can call them 'middle-men', because this notion is wide enough to encompass all of them. The fact that a greater analysis of these actors was not carried out can be justified for methodological issues. For instance, how do we identify these actors? Furthermore, the purpose of this chapter was to give a quantitative overview of the actors involved, and the influence of middle-men on the publications is impossible to quantify. However, most of these middle-men are also publishers or translators. The milieu of the specialists of Italian literature in France constitutes no more than fifty people; there are a few key people, that we were able to identify because they are referred to as specialists by the other members of the field (during the interviews) or because they have written the most important articles on Italian literature in the press. Several of these people were interviewed for this thesis. Consequently, it can be argued that, even though it is methodologically difficult to include a specific section on the middlemen, their influence in the chapters specifically dedicated to the publication process and their role in the reception of Italian literature (chapter 7) and networks (chapter 5) will not be overlooked.

The second important conclusion concerns the multiplicity and variety of the situations. The above description of the actors of the publication of Italian literature in France shows how fragmented the French editorial system is (despite its financial concentration). In this chapter we have illustrated the first transformation of the publishing world described by Brémond (2002) exposed in Chapter one, the growing influence of the "majors" on the commercialization of books. The concentration of the publishing world testifies to this phenomenon. In the next chapter, through a detailed analysis of the different steps of the publication of a book, we will consider Brémond's second point, the progressive interference of the marketing logic in editorial decisions. The overview of the different types of actors thus provides the background landscape for our analysis. A different approach will now be adopted in order to analyse the actors description and representation of their work.





## Chapter 5: How and why translated books are published

We have already looked at the actors – individual and collective - involved in the publication of Italian novels in France, and we have described these publications as the result of their aggregate action. We shall now examine these actors in terms of their degree of specialisation in Italian literature. By specialisation, we mean that some of them work exclusively with Italian literature (such as most translators) and possess a kind of expertise, whereas others deal with foreign literature in general, which may sometimes include Italian material (such as, for example, the head of a collection of foreign literature). There may also be some publishers, for instance, who are interested in Italian literature, either because they speak Italian or because of personal taste, but who are not specialists.<sup>1</sup> This distinction is helpful in order to understand the way that the decisions which lead to publication are made, because these decisions are the product of tensions between a series of constraints relating to the publishing world (specifically the book market) on the one hand, and certain exigencies concerning the reception of Italian literature in France (which involves, more abstractly, the interpretation of the expectations of the public with regard to Italy and thus the image of Italy in France) on the other hand. One of the issues at stake in this analysis is precisely that of the way marketing/economic logic interferes in the editorial decisions. In this chapter, we will look at the steps leading to the publication: the discovery of the book, the selection process, the negotiations, the choice of the translator and the diffusion. We will aim to be as precise as possible in the description of the actors' daily routine, because it will be argued that it is only through the detailed decomposition of their work that we will be able to reveal the real nature of the tension mentioned above and the issues that it raises. The sources for this analysis consist of the interviews conducted with the actors themselves. We will also need to look at the way they present their own work and how this can be interpreted. The second part of this chapter will thus put the actions described in the first part into perspective and it will relate them to the recent evolutions of the editorial system that were elucidated in chapter one.

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<sup>1</sup> In Annex 1, we make the distinction for our interviewees.

## 1. THE DECISIONS LEADING TO THE PUBLICATION

This part aims to present a panorama of the decision-making process which leads to the publication of a book: how it is found, upon which criteria it is decided to buy it, how the rights to the book are bought, how the negotiation process works, how the translator is chosen and how the book is launched. We will be very precise in the descriptions in order to draw lists of possibilities from the interviews. The aim of this section is to illustrate how things happen from the perspective of the actors of the field and how they describe their work.

### 1.1. Discovering the books

The very first step in the publication of a book is the discovery by a publisher. There are many ways of discovering a book, however, someone usually plays the role of intermediary. Translators, readers and agents traditionally advise publishers on what to look at, but it seems that the people involved in this process are becoming more diverse and numerous.

"Il n'y a pas de généralité. Chaque livre est une aventure différente de la précédente, bon... enfin, c'est souvent quand même, oui, des traducteurs, des professeurs."  
(Monique Desmottiers)

"Alors, il y a différents moyens. Il y a le signalement, qui peut venir par des réseaux qui, disons, ne sont pas des réseaux classiques. Un ami qui vous parle de tel livre, quelqu'un qui... un ami, une relation. Ça peut être des agents. Ça peut être l'éditeur italien qui vous en parle. Et puis, ça peut être aussi, puisque je lis la presse italienne, que je le découvre dans la presse."  
(Anna Moresco).

Before detailing the publisher's decision-making process, it is interesting to note that many publishers assert the importance of keeping in touch with the current trends in Italian literature. They use several channels to keep informed on the latest trends, such the catalogues sent by their Italian colleagues, specialized journals, the websites of Italian daily newspapers, agents, Italian bookshops and personal networks. It was only in a few cases that they did not keep themselves informed at Italian literature, but instead grasped opportunities as they would come up.

"Bon, d'abord, on regarde la presse italienne. Ensuite, on a des contacts tellement réguliers avec nos confrères, qui nous envoient les livres, les programmes, les auteurs..."  
(Jean Dupasquier)

"Bon, d'abord j'ai Internet, je suis abonnée à une lettre... c'est sur le site de la Rai. Et puis j'ai des amis italiens qui me tiennent au courant. Et quand je vais en Italie, je fais des razzias dans les librairies, j'ai deux ou trois librairies où on est potes..." (Myreille Jacob)

"Bon, je reçois des catalogues. Je regarde les suppléments des journaux sur Internet. Je vais sur la *Repubblica*, la *Stampa*, le *Corriere della Sera*. Je surveille." (Jérôme Dupuy)

These are answers to the question "do you keep informed as regards Italian literature? if yes, how?". The answers were always very general. In fact, there seems to be a discrepancy in the interviewee's discourses between these channels of information and the way that they discover the books publish. It seems as the gathering of information is part of a routine that does not necessarily lead to publications. It appears to be a compulsory part of the work that allows them to keep in touch with a certain reality and, thus, to react quickly when they hear about a book that they wish to buy. We will now look at the way in which they discover the books that they publish, and it will be shown that the sources of information are ultimately very useful.

### *Publishers*

"Bon, il y a longtemps que je m'intéressais à C. Une responsable éditoriale de chez Flammarion m'en avait parlé, c'est un auteur qui était chez Flammarion précédemment... et elle m'avait dit qu'il y avait ce titre qui n'était pas pris par Flammarion, qui était un bon titre... donc, elle s'est occupé de m'en faire parvenir un exemplaire, de me dire qui pourrait éventuellement le traduire, etc. Puis quelques... curieusement, c'est une coïncidence, quelques trois ou quatre mois plus tard Laure Fougère, qui pour le domaine italien nous a toujours un peu conseillé... en particulier quand on faisait la revue littéraire ... et elle m'a parlé aussi du même titre, donc je lui ai dit que ça avait été un titre qui m'avait été proposé précédemment par Flammarion." (Jérôme Dupuy)

In this case, the book was recommended both by a French publisher and by a translator who often works for the publishing house. When a book is recommended by a colleague, it means that he or she is not interested in buying the rights for this book, otherwise he or she would compete for them. This is why books are frequently recommended by publishers from other countries; either from Italy, in which case they usually advise books from their own catalogue, or from other countries, where they are often the publisher for the author in question.

"Une partie du travail consiste aussi à recevoir les éditeurs italiens quand ils viennent à Paris. Il y en a quand même beaucoup qui font le trajet à Paris une ou deux fois par an, notamment pour le Salon du Livre, ou en juin. Et puis là je viens d'en voir, je sais pas, une dizaine ou une quinzaine, à Francfort. Ils me disent, sois attentif à ces deux livres, je vais te les envoyer, je leur dis bon, un seul... et donc là, dans les jours qui viennent... hier on a envoyé une quinzaine de lettres à des éditeurs italiens que j'ai rencontrés à Francfort, en leur disant, tel ou tel livre de votre catalogue nous intéresse. Donc, là, dans les trois semaines qui viennent, on va recevoir ces livres, et on va les mettre en lecture. Voilà, ça c'est plutôt le travail habituel de découverte." (Jean Dupasquier)

This highlights the existence of networks of publishers from different countries, who communicate in order to "exchange" authors from their catalogue. In this way, they try to promote their authors and to buy foreign books at the same time.

"Les publications d'auteurs qui entrent dans le catalogue, ça nous vient de notre réseau, d'agents qui nous proposent des titres, d'éditeurs confrères, de choses qu'on nous recommande, souvent aussi de nos auteurs qui nous disent j'ai lu ça et ça..." (Jean Dupasquier)

"Disons que j'ai certains confrères italiens qui me téléphonent en me disant ce qu'ils ont découvert, en échange moi je leur dit ce que j'ai découvert sur l'Amérique Latine, puisque je suis plus au point qu'eux." (Marianne Grange)

It seems that every publishing house (or publisher) is part of several networks which can be based on personal relations, institutional exchanges or common interests (see the box below for illustration). One of the consequences of the consolidation of these networks is that it increases the inconsistency in the treatment of books:

"Ce livre est tout simplement arrivé par la responsable des droits de la maison Feltrinelli. Donc, elle nous a simplement envoyé une lettre en disant que toute la maison Feltrinelli était derrière ce livre, que c'était un livre important pour eux, qu'elle nous demandait vraiment de faire très attention à ce livre... Donc, bon, c'est vrai... A l'époque, je crois même que la lettre était signée par Carlo Feltrinelli, donc c'est vrai qu'on a regardé avec un peu plus d'attention que les autres livres. Et on a trouvé que c'était à la fois un sujet, un thème, un livre avec une certaine force, donc voilà... tout simplement, très vite, on l'a donné en lecture. Il y a eu deux ou trois lectures, une quatrième, et puis on a fait une offre à Feltrinelli. Ça c'est beaucoup plus habituel, si vous voulez, comme façon de procéder."

(Jean Dupasquier)

This publisher clearly affirms that they have looked carefully at this book because it was recommended by a colleague (whom they usually collaborate with). If it had not been the case, the book might never have been published. In fact, during an interview with the translator of this book, he mentioned that he did not really like the book, and that even the publisher was not very enthusiastic when he had asked him to translate it. This proves the bias introduced by the networks, which create subsequently obligations for the publishers.

#### How does a European network function?

*"Pourquoi j'ai publié X... parce que j'ai un réseau, si vous voulez, on dit en riant gang, club d'éditeurs européens qui avons un peu les mêmes goûts, les mêmes enthousiasmes... nous avons beaucoup d'auteurs en commun, et un des éditeurs dont je suis le plus proche en Europe c'est les éditions Anagrama, à Barcelone, un éditeur qui s'appelle Jorge Gerald, et Jorge m'a envoyé une lettre juste avant l'été 86 en me disant « Christian, j'ai découvert un auteur italien, publié par Sellerio », à Palerme, vous connaissez... et il me dit, c'est absolument un auteur pour toi." (Charles Chevallier)*

Although this individual was the first to publish this author in France, it had been brought to his attention by a Spanish colleague who had already started to launch the author in his own country. The idea of an international network is interesting in the context of foreign literature, as the different publishers of this network are not in competition as regards the publication of books (and thus the negotiation of rights). This interviewee told me off the record that he attended a dinner in London once or twice a year with a dozen of European publishers in order to discuss the latest literary trends and the emergence of interesting new authors. He admitted, jokingly, that this dinner led to the signature of more contracts than in Frankfurt<sup>1</sup>. After we had finished

<sup>1</sup> The Frankfurt European Book Fair seems to be losing its prominence as the place where contracts are set, as several interviewees mentioned.

the interview, and as I was packing my things, he spontaneously continued to speak in an informal manner about these networks. I tried to answer with light tone as well and find a way of encouraging him to talk. The conversation was much more informal than during the interview, and went on as he walked me to the door. The informal aspect of the situation was at the image of the network he was describing.

This anecdote emphasizes the importance of networks and informal places of contact in the exchanges of book. In fact, the traditional channels of discovery are losing their power as a result of the influence of more informal networks, constituted over the years. This example is symptomatic of the extension of the field, which is also taking place outside France. The dichotomy between the inside and the outside is useful for the description of networks: the relations are between people inside and outside the firm, the publishing world, Paris, France, and so on. Furthermore, it could be argued that these connections are the concrete manifestation of the action of the middlemen (in a very broad sense).

This increasing importance of the networks is also a consequence of the changes in the structure of the large publishing houses. They had enlarged in size until the 1970s and the beginning of the economic crisis; then, just like most large firms, they were constrained on the one hand to go back to the core business and outsell many activities and on the other, to develop the commercial services and the organisational aspects of sales. Throughout the 90s the structure of cultural industries worldwide was again reorganized, especially with the development of new digital technologies and ways of communication. They have undergone a process of internationalisation and progressive concentration, resulting in the formation of a few big conglomerates.

This evolution of the economic organisation of the firms led to the development of surrounding networks, often based on weak ties (Granovetter, 1973), that were informally but fully part of the organisation. *"A published book is very much the product of a chain of a great many individual decisions made by people interconnected within the various niches in the publishing industry"* (Coser, Lewis, Kadushin, 1982: 5). The increasing fragmentation was thus not only due to the increase in size of the firms, but also to their economic reorganisation.

### **Middle-men**

In some cases the books are recommended to the publisher by people other than colleagues or translators that wish to work on the book.

"Et ensuite, il y a un travail très régulier pour suivre pas l'intégralité de la production italienne mais une bonne partie de ce qui est publié en Italie... à l'extérieur, on a toute une série de lecteurs, parce que on peut pas tout faire nous-mêmes... qui suivent pour nous beaucoup de choses." (Jean Dupasquier)

"De plus en plus les éditeurs ont besoin de ce qu'ils appellent des rapporteurs, des gens qui apportent des bouquins, qui sont plus ou moins rémunérés pour ça, mais enfin... C'est un nouveau métier." (Henri Jouvenet)

These "rapporteurs" are often academics, booksellers or anyone connected in some way with the publishing house. They can be readers, or simply people who collaborate occasionally for one reason or the other with the publisher.

"Bon, B.C., qui est un de mes auteurs et qui est traducteur de T., m'a conseillé T. S., et donc j'ai publié T.S. parce que B. m'en avait parlé". (Charles Chevallier)

In this example, the *rapporteur* (reporter) is both an author from the publisher's catalogue and the translator of one of the most important authors of the publishing house. For instance, booksellers can also play this role, such as the Italian book shop of Paris ("La Tour de Babel"). The person in charge of it has worked there for over twenty years and is familiar with most of the people dealing with Italian literature in Paris.

"Je l'avais lu... Fortunato<sup>1</sup> m'avait dit, il faut absolument que tu lises ça, c'est très intéressant." (Laure Fougère)

"Et puis c'est une de mes amies, que j'avais rencontrée tout à fait par hasard parce qu'elle tenait une librairie qui était boulevard Saint-Marcel... qui appartenait au même groupe que l'écrivain que je traduis, qui appartenait au mouvement *Lotta Continua* et qui était donc émigrée en France, et qui m'a donné un jour ce livre en me disant, j'ai reçu ce livre de mon ami, j'aimerais bien que vous le lisiez, que vous me disiez ce que vous en pensez, parce que moi je le trouve très bien. S'il vous plaît, vous me le paierez demain." (Delphine Vasseur)

Booksellers, some translators and some academics often assume the role of advising publishers. In a way, they participate to the distribution of the books. However, it is difficult to understand the importance of their role or to determine how often books are published as a result of their intervention, as we did not systematically ask the publishers how every book on their catalogue was discovered.

### *Agents*

When a book is published in Italy, the author's agent or his publisher often decides to try to have the book published abroad, and thus distributes some copies of the original edition. This is what could be defined as the "normal situation", or a point of reference which does not take the existence of interpersonal relations between people of the publishing world into account. In this situation, the author's other books are usually published by the same French publisher. This was referred to above as "author policy" (*politique d'auteur*).

"Nous avons eu effectivement l'ouvrage en lecture, comme d'autres éditeurs, et il y a eu une petite compétition, parce que nul n'est censé ignorer que son succès en Italie est, malheureusement... ce qu'il lui est arrivé, sa maladie et sa mort etc. Donc, il y avait tout un contexte dont quelques éditeurs français étaient au courant." (Thierry Durel)

"Bon, on va prendre le dernier, parce que c'est quelqu'un qui est connu, et c'est un auteur qu'on suit. Donc, c'est la politique de la maison d'avoir une politique d'auteur, dans la mesure du possible. (...) Donc, c'est un auteur qu'on suit depuis son premier texte, donc ça fait le quatrième texte chez nous qu'on a publié, qu'on a décidé de publier pour le Salon du livre 2002." (Claudine Plessier)

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<sup>1</sup> Fortunato T. owns the bookshop "La Tour de Babel" in Paris.

However, this process does not always follow the same pattern. For instance, it is possible that an author may decide to change his publisher, and thus contacts a potential replacement.

"Il est venu nous voir, enfin, son agent est venu nous voir il y a trois ans de ça pour nous dire, comme ça arrive parfois, que l'auteur était mal à l'aise, malheureux, dans la maison d'édition où il était publié en France, en l'occurrence R.. Ce qui nous met toujours un tout petit peu mal à l'aise, parce que ça peut aussi nous arriver dans l'autre sens.... enfin, c'est quelque chose qu'il faut prendre en compte. Important quand même à dire, nous on n'avait fait aucune démarche dans ce sens, c'est vraiment l'auteur qui avait demandé à son agent de venir nous voir." (Jean Dupasquier)

This is not a very common situation and it only pertains to publishers with a high symbolical recognition in the field. In fact, it is an element to take into account when evaluating the publishers, at least at a symbolic level. However, this also implies that one must look at the economic dimension (through the prism of success), as part of the motivation for an author to leave his publisher concerns the management of the launching of his books.

Finally, in some cases, the publisher bypasses all existing networks and directly meets the author (willingly or not), or else it is the author himself to bypass the usual channels.

"L.G., je l'ai rencontrée, moi, en Espagne, à une rencontre sur le roman noir. Je lui ai demandé de m'envoyer ses bouquins, je les ai lus et j'ai trouvé que c'était bien." (Marianne Grange)

"Il faut savoir que les italiens sont très actifs, les éditeurs et les agents, parfois aussi, malheureusement pour nous, les auteurs, dans l'envoi." (Jean Dupasquier)

The final example is very peculiar, and this is due to the symbolic prestige of this publisher. He explains then that on average they receive two Italian manuscripts each week, which means that Italian authors who have not (yet) been published in their own country often contact a French publisher with the hope of being translated and published in France. These manuscripts are not read by the publisher, who justifies it by saying that they have too much to read overall, and that the fact of that they have not been published in Italy discredits the text *a priori*.

### *The translator*

Most translators suggest books that they would like to translate to many publishers. In fact, many publishers have several "specialists" for Italian literature, who usually also translate Italian novels for them, and who are in charge of drawing attention to potentially interesting books. Surprisingly, during the interviews with the publishers, they hardly ever spoke at length about this channel of discovery, and they focused more upon the international networks of colleagues.<sup>1</sup> It was the translators themselves who revealed their role as advisers.

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<sup>1</sup> This is interesting for the analysis of the role and work of the translators that was developed in the chapter 4.

"Ça se passe toujours à peu près dans ce cas de figure, c'est une recherche d'un éditeur qui serait intéressé par la publication d'un ouvrage qu'on considère important dans la littérature italienne contemporaine, ou classique... il faut envoyer des courriers en montrant l'importance du projet, de l'écrivain, et en même temps en montrant quel pourrait être l'attrait de cette publication pour l'éditeur..." (Paul Matonti)

"Personnellement il m'est arrivé plusieurs fois d'avoir connaissance de livres qui éventuellement n'étaient pas publiés, soit parce que je connaissais des éditeurs en Italie, soit parce que je connaissais des auteurs, de lire ces textes, de les signaler à des éditeurs, et puis de nous vois souffler la signature du contrat par une autre maison, parce que les agents étaient passés par derrière et avaient fait monter les enchères. Là il y a un problème de jeu d'enchères et de marché, qui est une donnée de fait." (Marco Guglielmi)

"Oui, alors j'ai proposé un texte, d'ailleurs ça s'est fait... un texte de F... F. est déjà très installé en France, donc ça n'a posé aucun problème à faire accepter par Fayard." (Danièle Perrineau)

### *Personal discovery*

As a start of the interviews, the publishers were usually asked to pick an Italian novel from their catalogue and to explain why this book was chosen to be published. This introduces an obvious bias, as they were free to choose any book. However, there are several justifications for this act. Firstly, the turnover in publishing houses is quite high, and some of them have only published a few Italian books, and consequently, some of the people interviewed did not have many Italian publications (at least for the publishers they worked for at the time of the interview). In addition, I also assumed that they would have more to say about a book of their choice rather than a book that was decided by the interviewer. If our aim had been to undertake a quantitative analysis of the channels of discovery, then it would have been necessary to systematically analyse for every book how the publisher had come learnt about it. As explained in the methodological part (Introduction and Annex 1), our objective was also to understand what the publishers consider important. Consequently, they emphasize what they believe is most important: this means that they impose their own scale of values. More concretely, they insist on their personal role in the discovery of the books, their personal flair and intuition, and also on the importance of luck. It is assumed that they want to show the most positive side of their work, the side that they perceive as valuable and noble as regards the discovery of books. It thus appears that the publishers' judgement of what is noble and what is less interesting is based on a symbolic and implicit distinction between intuition, on the one hand, and the use of the traditional channels of discovery, on the other.

The first observation which can be made is that, in some cases, the publishers simply discovered the book while they were engaged in the "normal" (i.e. symbolically less noble) part of their work.



"C'est un livre que j'avais repéré en Italie chez Sellerio, peut-être plus par le titre que par l'importance... je ne connaissais pas, jamais entendu parler." (Yves Tessarin)

"J'avais lu... un livre qui s'appelait *Giornale di lavoro*, qui était son premier livre. (...) J'avais toujours gardé ce souvenir. Et puis cet auteur a été traduit, par la suite, chez d'autres éditeurs, et je l'ai lu en français. Les autres titres, pas celui-là, qui n'avait jamais été traduit, mais d'autres titres, et j'ai fait des critiques... et souvent c'est ce cheminement. C'est-à-dire que j'ai fait des critiques dans *Le Monde* donc je me suis intéressé à lui, et puis j'ai été en contact avec lui, parce que il m'a remercié pour les critiques." (Paul Darlignac)

In the first example, the publisher, who often goes to Italy and always pays a visit to some bookshops there, even though he does not speak fluent Italian, was attracted to the book because of its title and its Italian publisher. He explained, later, that he likes Sellerio's work and that he often seeks inspiration from their catalogue. There was no intermediary, as no one mentioned the book to him. In the second case, there is a longer process involved in getting to know an author, that finally leads to a collaboration (he ends up publishing a book by the author in his collection).

"J'étais à Rome, ma compagne est sicilienne, et je suis tombé comme ça par hasard sur *La stagione della caccia*, et je l'ai lu, et d'ailleurs ce qui est marrant c'est que, bah, j'étais loin de tout comprendre, il y avait plein de mots que je ne comprenais pas... mais j'ai quand même été emballé." (Sylvain Renucci)

"L'autre exemple, encore plus, comment dirais-je, anecdotique... ça peut être A.B. Lorsque je suis arrivé dans la maison en... janvier 1995, si je ne m'abuse... j'ai trouvé sur une étagère un peu poussiéreuse quelques chapitres de [*titre du livre*], qui était donc à l'examen depuis quelques temps, sur le dos d'un éditeur qui n'est plus dans la maison... et, Dieu merci, il y avait aussi des petits bouts de traduction présentés par F.B., qui est aujourd'hui, bien sûr, la traductrice de A.B. en français. Donc, j'ai pris connaissance de ces choses qui traînaient dans un coin et je me suis dit, "voilà qui est fort intéressant", et en effet dès qu'on avait lu quelques pages d'un essai de traduction, à l'évidence ça avait une voix singulière, un écrivain qui ne laissait pas indifférent." (Thierry Durel)

"Le premier, il est arrivé en photocopies, il y avait 450 pages de photocopies en vrac avec un élastique, remis par une amie italienne, qui m'a dit, "moi j'ai lu ça quand j'étais jeune, c'est un plaisir total, en plus c'est un livre emblématique de la Sicile". Bon, je suis censée ne pas lire l'italien. Je parle l'espagnol et le portugais, mais je suis censée ne pas lire l'italien et n'avoir jamais parlé l'italien. Je donne ça à lire à un de nos lecteurs, qui lit l'italien, qui commence à le lire et qui me dit, "écoute, il y a trop de pages, ça m'ennuie, je te le rends". Et puis je mets ça en pile à côté de mon lit, et un jour je prends la colère, je dis merde, on va voir ce que ça donne, un samedi je me mets à lire. (...) Donc, j'ai cherché l'éditeur pour lui acheter les droits." (Marianne Grange)

In some cases, the publisher presents their own discovery as chance, luck, or even magic. The first example relates to chance, due to the fact that the publisher was in Italy and had the opportunity to discover this book. In the other two examples, there is more of a "fairy tale" aspect. The myth is that of the dusty forgotten manuscript which is re-discovered by a curious publisher. This relates to the image of the *éditeur-découvreur* who overcomes the obstacles (here, mainly language) and manages to perceive the interest of a text that had been put on the side by others.

## 1.2. Which criteria for the selection?

Once the book is read by the publisher or their readers, decision has to be made as regards the eventual publication. The meetings of the reading committees that discuss several books and either refuse them or accept to publish them provide an ideal opportunity. However, in reality the situations are diverse, and decisions are not always made at a formal reading committee meeting. We will now try to understand which criteria are implemented, and whether they are used consistently or not by every publisher.

First of all, it should be considered whether these criteria are specific to Italian literature in general. In the interviews, it was usually obvious that they concerned literature in general, although a distinction could be made between French literature and its foreign counterpart. In the context of foreign literature, as we will see, the literary value is more difficult to evaluate, as not all of the publishers read foreign languages. However, this distinction was rarely made and they usually claimed that the criteria are universal.

*"C'est pareil pour la littérature française?  
Oui, pareil." (Jérôme Dupuy)*

*"Oui, c'est des critères propres à la Fosse aux Ours, c'est-à-dire que c'est pas spécifique à la littérature italienne." (Yves Tessarin)*

*"Pour la littérature en général, nous essayons de choisir des textes qui correspondent à notre catalogue." (Anna Moresco)*

During the interviews, the publishers were usually asked which criteria they used for deciding which book to publish. The question completely was left open. I will start with presenting the most criteria common presented, such as the personal taste of the publisher, the literary quality of the book, the topic of the book, the notion of editorial necessity, the way it fits in the catalogue and finally, the influence of economic constraints.

### *Taste*

The issue of taste is hardly ever explained as the publishers take for granted their own ability to have a literary taste, of course. This statement may seem obvious, but it is interesting to note that they trust their intuition. Taste is related to pleasure, and to a certain extent, to a dignified idea of love for literature.

*"Bon, je vais prendre le dernier livre, que je suis très fier d'avoir publié... auteur que j'aime beaucoup, que nous aimons beaucoup, et livre que nous aimons beaucoup, tous ici." (Jérôme Dupuy)*

"Ça c'est un livre que j'ai beaucoup aimé, que nous avons sorti comme ça, sans trop savoir ce qui allait se passer, avec cette incertitude liée à tout lancement d'un écrivain étranger, et d'autant plus italien, ce qui n'est pas forcément le gage du succès public immédiat en France."  
(Thierry Durel)

"Alors, oui, je pourrais parler, il y a un livre que j'aime beaucoup dans le catalogue, qui est d'un sarde qui s'appelle S.A. Et c'est le livre que je préfère dans tout le catalogue, c'est [*titre du livre*]. (...) Oui, c'est des critères propres à [*nom de la maison d'édition*], c'est-à-dire que c'est pas spécifique à la littérature italienne, mais généralement ce sont des livres qui me ressemblent. Ce sont des livres que j'aurais aimé lire, et puis c'est mon bon plaisir, aussi, basta..."  
(Yves Tessarin)

In first two examples, the publishers are proud of their choice. In the first case, the publication is very recent, and he has thus no idea of the success of the book. However, he presents it as a collective project based on the unanimity of taste. The second case differs, as the book mentioned has since become a best-seller, and the publisher is proud that he had the great intuition to publish a book by an unknown author, just because he liked it, and that its success provides evidence of his good taste. However, it is interesting to see the individual commitment in the choice of books, by claiming that it is based on personal appreciation. The last example deals with the pleasure that the book brings. His definition of taste differs slightly from the others, as he emphasized a more personal aspect by saying that the books reflect his taste. In other cases, the focus is on a love for Italy rather than for the book itself:

"Mais ce que je voudrais vous dire, c'est que moi je fais pas d'édition de manière planifiée, systématique, en me disant qu'il faut que je couvre tous les territoires. J'ai publié des italiens parce que je vais souvent en Italie, parce que j'ai des liens d'amitié..." (Charles Chevallier)

"Pour l'Italie, le raisonnement était un peu différent, mais j'aime beaucoup l'Italie, j'y allais beaucoup à l'époque... euh, je pensais qu'il y avait, après m'être renseignée évidemment, qu'il y avait beaucoup de choses à faire. Les grands étaient pris, évidemment, les grands éditeurs prennent les grands noms, ça il n'y a rien à dire... qu'il y avait quand même des choses à faire, qu'on pouvait se faire remarquer... à moindres frais, ça c'est une autre histoire, mais on pouvait se faire remarquer, oui, se distinguer, si vous voulez, sur un pays que j'aimais bien, une littérature que j'aimais bien." (Monique Desmortiers)

These two publishers explain that they have chosen to publish Italian books partly because they like the country. In the first case, the implicit reason is the existence of a network of people who advise him, including Italian people. In the second example, there was a gap and she was looking for new authors to publish. However, the choice is still justified on the basis of taste. Sometimes, the idea of taste is strengthened by that of desire.

"Moi j'ai un coup de cœur, j'ai une envie de publier tel ou tel livre... après, j'ai envie de faire passer auprès du public cette envie de le lire (...) Dans le cas de C., j'avais lu ses précédents livres, j'avais lu des textes courts de lui. J'ai immédiatement senti cette... qualité, chez lui. Bon, voilà, ça me parle." (Jérôme Dupuy)

"En général je préfère me... dans la mesure où j'ai envie de faire quelque chose dans lequel je me reconnaisse, et dans lequel je m'amuse, je préfère faire des... ce qui me plaît."  
(Marianne Grange)

This desire is based on the will to communicate either the publisher's discovery to the public or simply to publish something of interest to the publisher. In all of these extracts, it seems that the choice of books depends entirely upon the publisher's desire, thus making it seem as if he is not bound by any constraint. Nonetheless, during the discussion on the criteria for choosing material, it became clear that there were constraints.

### *The quality concern*

The quality of the book is often presented by the publishers as an objective criteria and this calls for further clarification. For instance, Myriam Couratier clearly asserts that the publisher she works for gives absolute priority to the literary quality and "writing" style (*une écriture, une plume*). Similarly, other publishers claim that:

"Il y a la qualité littéraire de l'auteur, ça prime sur tout". (Anna Moresco)

"Moi, les critères que je privilégie, c'est d'essayer de faire émerger, d'abord une esthétique, un engagement littéraire très fort..." (Jacques Laplace)

The emphasis is often on the combination of literary quality and commercial constraints:

"Les critères pour publier un livre étranger sont extrêmement simples. C'est d'une part la valeur littéraire intrinsèque de l'œuvre, d'une part, et d'autre part, éventuellement, ses aspects commerciaux. C'est donc un équilibre entre les deux aspects." (Guido Pierucci)

"Ecoutez, pour un éditeur généraliste, il y a deux façons d'aborder un livre. Il faut que ce soit ou une très bonne qualité littéraire, ou avec un potentiel commercial important et dans l'idéal, bien entendu, les deux à la fois." (Thierry Durel)

It is difficult to know, however, how literary quality is defined. Large publishing houses most often have reading committees, which means that the decision is not made by one individual. Indeed, the issue of taste depends so much on the personal characteristics and (literary) history of the reader that a book is seldom chosen unanimously.

"Vous savez, les critères de choix littéraire, ils sont liés à la sensibilité de chacun. Bon, il est nécessaire, bien sûr, de nous confronter, c'est-à-dire que nous nous réunissons dans des comités de lecture, qui sont hebdomadaires. On se parle entre nous de nos lectures, nous nous faisons lire. (...)

Il faut aussi se poser ces questions, parce que les goûts... les goûts littéraires, c'est trop large. On a une vie intérieure, une vie affective, une vie sexuelle même parfois qui peut avoir... entraîner des blocages dans les lectures, dont il faut avoir conscience. Et justement, quand on est dans une maison, comme ça, collective, c'est toujours bien de pouvoir confronter, de voir quand les barrières peuvent tomber ou au contraire quand on doit affirmer ses choix. Bon, dans le domaine étranger c'est différent, parce que... on s'intéresse à des livres qui ont déjà été édités, pour la plupart des cas, donc il y a déjà eu toute une sélection qui a été faite. Simplement, il faut savoir... il faut bien connaître la littérature de départ, et aussi le monde éditorial et critique français, et de librairie français." (Paul Darlignac)

Conversely, the focus is often on the objective character of this quality:

"C'est donc l'opportunité de tel ou tel auteur ou tel ou tel ouvrage qui... qui relève d'une sélection rigoureuse sur le plan du texte et de la lecture, et pas dirigée par des arrière-pensées, qu'elles soient théoriques, historiques ou quoi que ce soit puisque, encore une fois, c'est une perception généraliste. Donner à lire au plus grand nombre euh... Des ouvrages qui n'ont pas de définition à priori mais qui sont choisis pour leurs qualités intrinsèques, voilà."  
(Thierry Durel)

This raises the issue of competency, due to the fact that the manuscripts (or the "books", when they are already published in the home country, which is most often the case) are written in Italian. In order to evaluate their literary quality, one needs not only to be able to read this language, but also to have an adequate level that allows them to perceive the subtleties of the writing.

"Alors, je suis arrivé maintenant, surtout en littérature française, à dépasser un petit peu ça, j'ai édité notamment un auteur, je pense qu'il est bourré de talent, c'est quelque chose que je n'aime pas forcément en goût littéraire... c'est une littérature qui m'ennuie un peu, il y a une telle force... mais là, c'est le genre de truc que je pourrais pas faire sur l'italien, parce que je peux pas apprécier d'emblée la qualité littéraire..." (Yves Tessarin)

"Et moi, là, je lis l'italien, pas très bien... bon, je lis d'autres langues couramment mais pas celle-là, donc je peux lire le journal mais je n'ai pas la finesse de pouvoir apprécier un style littéraire..." (Thierry Durel)

The most important word in this extract is *d'emblée*. Before the meeting, this publisher admitted that he could not speak Italian, but could appreciate the general meaning of a text. However, his statement implies that at some point he is able to evaluate the literary quality (although he might need the help of someone else). This contradiction was found in most of the interviews, as most interviewees only have a basic knowledge of Italian (or no knowledge at all), and yet they assert the great relevance of the writing. It is not clear whether they read all of the manuscripts themselves or not. In the case of big publishing houses, this is obviously not the case, and we shall consider the role of the intermediaries and the importance of readers (who are often the translators themselves) in the next section. However, regarding small publishing houses, external readers are rarely used. We will see that there is often one person responsible for all of the Italian manuscripts in these houses. However, it is interesting to highlight the appropriation of the evaluation (and thus of the choice of the book) by the publisher him(her)self.<sup>1</sup>

### *The subject-matter of the book*

This criterion relates to the internal characteristics of the book, such as its subject, the background and the message conveyed within it.

"Disons que nous ce que nous aimons bien ce sont les auteurs qui sont dans la vie réelle, qui nous parlent du monde d'aujourd'hui, qui nous parlent du monde... bon, le C. par exemple,

<sup>1</sup> We will deal with this more in details when we will look at the way they present themselves, or their publishing house.

un italien qui se promène avec un compagnon de voyage en Afrique francophone, ça nous intéresse, parce que... il y a un choc de cultures, une vision européenne, occidentale, qui va se poser sur un monde très traditionnel, et tout. Moi ce qui m'intéresse c'est de savoir comment C. le percevait, voilà." (Jérôme Dupuy)

"... des textes qui vous permettent de découvrir un monde, un univers, un arrière-plan politique, un arrière-plan social, qui racontent une histoire." (Anna Moresco)

The criterion is also related to the nature of the story and its ability to convey a message:

"Soit des gens de ma génération, parce qu'il y a une histoire politique derrière, une histoire idéologique avec laquelle je me reconnais, je suis en phase... Je publie surtout des romans qui racontent des histoires... je crois que des romans qui sont une très belle écriture mais pas d'histoire, ça passe très mal à la traduction. Et, c'est plutôt agité, ce que je publie... c'est plus proche du roman d'aventures. J'aime qu'on me raconte des histoires. Et puis aussi, des jeunes. J'aime bien les jeunes auteurs comme ça, qui ont trente, trente-cinq ans... C'est bien, c'est des choses en train de se faire. On les voit évoluer d'un livre à l'autre, et ça c'est vraiment bien." (Marianne Grange)

"Par ailleurs on aime bien dans les maisons d'édition des textes qui vous permettent de découvrir un monde, un univers, un arrière-plan politique, un arrière-plan social, qui racontent une histoire. Bon, évidemment il y a des exceptions, mais dans l'ensemble c'est ça que nous privilégions". (Anna Moresco)

In the above extracts, the focus is again on personal taste, in other words, an interest in specific topics, which is shared by all of the team and is the product of a collective assessment. It is thus not at all oriented towards the public. However, in other cases the publisher searches for the kind of topic that can reach the largest proportion of the public as possible:

"Vous commencez par chercher la qualité littéraire, peut-être que vous ne la trouvez pas, mais vous trouvez en revanche une espèce de saga populaire ou je ne sais quoi qui peut plaire à un grand public." (Thierry Durel)

### *An editorial project?*

Another criterion is linked to the idea of a mission of the publisher. For instance, Alain Cohen insists on the importance of publishing the unknown Italian classics in France. Some of them have never been published, such as Leopardi's philosophical writings, and he considers it to be his duty to deliver them to the French public. This is related to a certain perception of the publisher's job as an intellectual mission. In other words, he tries to follow a preconceived idea of his profession (*métier*).

"G. on le lit pas beaucoup, soyons honnêtes. Je publie G. avec obstination, mais on ne le lit pas beaucoup.

*Qu'est ce qui fait qu'on le publie encore, alors ?*

Mais parce que, si vous voulez, j'estime qu'il est de la mission d'un éditeur qui se fait une certaine idée de son métier, et je ne suis pas le seul à Paris à me faire cette idée de mon métier... dans le temps je disais, je suis un passeur de textes, mais on a tellement abusé de cette expression qu'on peut plus l'employer. C'est vrai, il faut faire passer les textes, et donc on peut estimer que si des œuvres importantes, dans un premier temps, et même sur un temps long, ne trouvent pas de lecteurs, il faut que ces œuvres soient traduites et publiées.

Mais pour moi c'est un problème général, qui ne concerne pas la littérature italienne en particulier mais toutes sortes de littératures, enfin de langues, que, je vous dis, je ne pratique pas, mais d'auteurs que je publie." (Charles Chevallier)

In this example, the publisher should consider the literary value of certain texts, regardless whether they are successful or not. One of the readers for an important publisher mentioned another kind of "project", which is directly oriented towards the public, in the spirit of cultural openness:

"En tant que lecteur, c'est difficile, je vous ai dit... Je m'aperçois qu'un bouquin peut avoir un intérêt dans la mesure où à la fois il... pourra être reçu par le lectorat français, en fonction des bouquins que moi j'ai lu... Mais en même temps, il apporte un décalage suffisant pour permettre au lectorat français de subir l'épreuve de l'étranger, c'est tout, ça va pas au-delà... Bon, l'épreuve de l'étranger, c'est la possibilité, c'est ce dont parle Antoine Berman, je sais pas si vous avez eu l'occasion de le lire... c'est la possibilité d'accepter à la fois dans sa langue et dans sa culture des nouveautés, parfois un peu difficiles, un peu torturantes, voilà."  
(Henri Jouvenet).

In order to be published, a book has to fit into the publisher's editorial project, assuming that he has one. However, it is rarely as precise as the publication of certain classics, as there is always an implicit project, or objective, in line with the rest of the catalogue and collection.

#### *How does the book fit into the publishers' catalogue or collection?*

The idea of a "catalogue" is an important consideration in deciding whether a book can be published or not. Here, we are not dealing any more with the way the book was perceived by the publisher, not even with its internal qualities. The catalogue of a publisher is supposed to reflect a project and a certain coherence between the books published. A big publisher explains, for instance, that they receive books (already published in their own countries), sent by their Italian colleagues. This implies that a choice has firstly been made by these colleagues, who send their books according to what they themselves define as the "interests" of the French publishers. These books are then distributed to the appropriate readers, whose have the task of judging the literary quality and also, to a larger extent, of deciding whether the book fits into the catalogue. Ultimately, the head of the publishing house makes the final decision. As a smaller publisher explains:

"Pour la littérature, en général, nous essayons de choisir des textes qui correspondent à notre catalogue, c'est-à-dire une littérature... euh... qui est une littérature de contexte."  
(Anna Moresco)

There is another dimension of the catalogue which is determined by the authors. This is part of the unity and the coherence mentioned above, as the head of the foreign literature collection for another big publisher explains:

"Bon, alors, dans la mesure où on part pas de zéro, mais d'un catalogue déjà constitué, le premier critère c'est la politique d'auteur. Parce que, la plupart finalement des titres que nous publions sont des suites ou une suite à quelque chose de déjà existant dans le catalogue. Donc, ça c'est le premier critère, on suit nos auteurs, et il y en a beaucoup qui ont une production régulière. Donc, les titres nouveaux de nos auteurs fournissent déjà, sans qu'on fasse quoi que ce soit, si j'ose dire, une bonne part de notre programme." (Jean Dupasquier)

In reality, the idea of catalogue is close to that of editorial line. In general, this expression was easily used by publishers with quite high symbolic prestige. For the smaller ones, it is sometimes mentioned as a sort of reference point, an ideal situation:

"Mais bon, on suit pas une ligne éditoriale très droite... elle est sinueuse." (Jérôme Dupuy)

Obviously, Jérôme Dupuy has some kind of global project for his publishing house, but the constraints sometimes make it impossible to stick to it. In some cases, a way of dealing with the idea of catalogue, especially when it is a small one, is to focus on the characteristics of the authors themselves.

"Bon, maintenant... ça a changé, pour moi, dans ma tête, avec le développement de la maison. Je préfère publier des auteurs vivants. Et, en vieillissant, je trouve que c'est plus intéressant de faire des jeunes. [*she laughs*]. Je crois... disons, les grands ancêtres, c'est bien, mais je pense qu'il est beaucoup plus intéressant de découvrir des gens. D'abord, il faut que ce soit des gens qui soient inconnus en France, autrement ça n'a aucun intérêt, je vais pas reprendre des auteurs qui ont déjà été traduits par d'autres, ça m'ennuie. Moi, ce qui m'excite, c'est de faire découvrir." (Marianne Grange)

Furthermore, this discussion should be related to the existence of collections. In fact, when we talk about catalogues, they can be general catalogues (especially in the case of small publishing houses), but also collections catalogues. They work as filters for the selection process, and they aim to guarantee a certain coherence of the books published.

#### How does the system of collections function?

In the French system, the existence of collections can be related to a certain conception of the division of labour, and thus to a certain cultural logic. In fact, the system of collections is based on the need to delegate: the publisher, in the sense of the head of the publishing house, delegates the task of controlling what fits in the catalogue to several members of the firm (mainly the heads of collections). These people are in charge of guaranteeing that the "minimum standards" are respected. These standards represent what we can refer to as editorial line, in a general sense. This is only possible because there is a constructed and well-established relation between the various members of the publishing house, which is based on cultural esteem. The director acknowledges the head of collection's capacity to respect the cultural logic of the



collection, and thus, of the editorial choices of the publishing house. In this respect, the system of collections is part of the overall project of the publishing house.

### *The economic constraint*

Finally, the most rational criteria is the satisfaction of economic constraint. The publishers do not often emphasize this idea. Some of them look at the success of the book in its own country and take this into account in the decision. They assume that if a book has been successful in Italy, then there is a good chance that it will do well in France. In reality, it is not only the case, but still this is one of the economic criteria. However, the quest for the "best-seller" is never proposed as the main criterion. Whenever it is mentioned, it is always combined with the idea of literary quality:<sup>1</sup>

"Les critères pour publier un livre étranger sont extrêmement simples. C'est d'une part la valeur littéraire intrinsèque de l'œuvre, d'une part, et d'autre part, éventuellement, ses aspects commerciaux. C'est donc un équilibre entre les deux aspects." (Guido Pierucci)

"Ecoutez, pour un éditeur généraliste, il y a deux façons d'aborder un livre. Il faut que ce soit ou une très bonne qualité littéraire, ou avec un potentiel commercial important et dans l'idéal, bien entendu, les deux à la fois." (Thierry Durel)

"Bon, selon le critère de la nouveauté, de l'intérêt d'un livre, euh... voilà. En quoi un livre, un texte, est intéressant dans un parcours qui est à la fois italien, mais qui doit être présenté à un marché différent, à une exploitation différente... je parle de marché d'exploitation en termes très génériques, en fait. Voilà, ce sont deux éléments importants qui visent à la fois une pratique commerciale, et surtout un intérêt littéraire. En quoi un texte peut être important, venant de l'Italie, et passant dans une situation littéraire comme celle française, en fait." (Claude Muccino)

It is interesting to note that the publishers introduce a symbolic classification of the criteria that they define. It is not noble to publish books in order to make a profit, whereas the search for literary value is considered to be a dignified endeavour. Basically, this is the recurrent distinction between symbolic and economic success, which finds expression in the choice of the books. Most publishers want to be recognised for the quality of their catalogue however, in any case, they have to follow a minimum of economic constraints, as they are companies that need to survive and be somehow competitive in the market. In the case of Italian literature, the symbolic dimension is very important. For instance, if we were to look at the market of romantic novels, we would probably find out that the main criterion for choosing one of these book is its potential commercial success. Furthermore, some publishers, almost ironically, assert that they do not point at all to commercial success. The underlying idea is that it is a complex market which is

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<sup>1</sup> See also the quotes from Guido Pierucci and Thierry Durel on the section dedicated to the "Quality concern".

difficult to decipher, and that the best thing to do is to follow the emotional criteria, so that at least the chances of gaining symbolic recognition are increased:

"Alors, le marché, non! parce que chaque fois que j'ai voulu faire un best-seller, j'ai bien compris, c'est mes plus beaux échecs. Et chaque fois que tout le monde a dit bof, ça a marché." (Marianne Grange)

### 1.3. Negotiating

#### *Agents*

Once the publisher or head of collection has decided that a book fits into their catalogue, the next step is to negotiate the rights with either the Italian publisher or the author's agent. In fact, many authors are represented by their publisher in Italy, which is not usually the case in France:

"D'abord, en Italie, la plupart des auteurs sont encore représentés par leur éditeur, et pas par un agent. Peut-être que c'est moitié-moitié, maintenant, je ne sais pas..." (Jean Dupasquier)

This evolution points towards an increasing recourse to agents (as Jean Dupasquier says that some Italian authors are "still" represented by their publisher). This is confirmed by a person who is responsible for the foreign rights in a medium-size publishing house:

*"Et en général, en Italie, les auteurs ont des agents ?*

Bon, nous, pour la collection, on est souvent passés par une agence, mais qui est française, la Nouvelle agence, qui via une agence italienne a des auteurs italiens.

*Donc les relations sont entre les deux agences ?*

Oui, et pas entre les auteurs directement.

*C'est une évolution, générale ça ?*

Ca va être de plus en plus, oui, ils y viennent."

(Claudine Plessier)

Furthermore, there are two types of agents:

*"Et donc, il y a quelques agences qui ont les auteurs clé?*

Oui, il y a quelque agences. Il y en a pas non plus énormément, d'agences, mais quand même. C'est-à-dire que, comme en France, il y a deux sortes d'agences: il y a les agences d'auteurs, ils sont liés par un contrat, et puis, comme en France, il y a aussi les sous-agences, qui représentent des auteurs ou des éditeurs étrangers en Italie et qui font la vente des titres français, américains, en Italie. Donc, ces agences-là, il y en a beaucoup. Les agences d'auteurs, il y en a cinq ou six. Voilà."

(Jean Dupasquier)

The fact that an author has an agent can change the nature of the relation between the French publisher and the author, as he plays the role of intermediary. For the author, the motivations for hiring an agent are usually practical, in order to avoid organisational problems.

"C.C. était pour ses trois premiers romans représentée par son éditeur italien, qui est Feltrinelli, elle continue à publier chez lui, néanmoins depuis son dernier roman, celui qu'on a publié l'année dernière, elle est passé chez un agent, parce que... parce que, dit-elle, elle ne sait pas gérer... elle n'est pas capable de juger de la teneur des contrats, elle ne sait pas gérer

ces problèmes là, donc elle a pris un agent et elle n'a pas pris 'agent en exclusivité, m'a-t-elle dit... parce que, bon, moi je trouvais que c'était un peu dommage, parce que je pense pas que les agents défendent forcément mieux leurs auteurs que les éditeurs, mais bon... comme... voilà, elle a voulu s'en assurer, donc elle a pris un agent. Donc, pour ce dernier livre, j'ai traité avec l'agent littéraire Susanna Svi, qui est à Turin, et qui donc est l'agent de C.C. Pour les contrats, ça se passe comme ça, de la même manière que si c'était un éditeur, sauf que... Il y a quand même une petite nuance : ayant traduit les trois premiers romans, on se disait que c'était logique de recevoir le quatrième. Je me suis aperçue, fonctionnant avec un agent, que pour eux c'était pas forcément ni logique, ni évident, ni ça ne coulait de source. Donc, je me suis dit qu'il fallait un peu se battre." (Claudine Plessier)

For the foreign publisher, the presence of the agent deeply modifies the nature of their relationship with the author. In the interviews, it is often claimed that the agents slows down the transactions.

"C'est quand même plus facile pour nous de travailler directement avec nos auteurs, et avec un confrère plutôt qu'avec un agent. Un agent défend les intérêts de l'auteur, certes, mais il défend aussi ses propres intérêts, il est rémunéré uniquement sur sa commission d'agent, donc il a intérêt à ce que l'à-valoir soit le plus élevé possible. Alors qu'un collègue, en face, peut tout à fait comprendre les problèmes de construire un auteur, les problèmes de délai de publication, de programme trop chargé... parce que, il a les mêmes. Donc, avec l'Italie, souvent je suis obligé de passer par des agents, parce que quand l'auteur a un agent la question ne se pose pas... mais il est évident que nous on préfère travailler avec des confrères. Et l'Italie est dans une situation intermédiaire. C'est pas comme l'Espagne ou les Etats-Unis où tout le monde est représenté par des agents, mais il y a quand même un bon tiers des auteurs, maintenant, qui... et souvent ça fait suite à des différends qu'il y a eu, sur la transparence des comptes, sur... voilà." (Jean Dupasquier)

"En ce qui concerne les agents littéraires, qui ont un rôle très important parce que souvent ils ont connaissance des textes avant même qu'ils ne soient publiés, et ils communiquent des choses qui sont intéressantes quand la presse même locale du pays d'origine n'en a pas encore parlé... ce qui permet de gagner du temps, parce qu'il y a aussi tout l'aspect concurrence et marché qui fait qu'on essaye toujours de piquer aux copains les bouquins qui pourraient éventuellement intéresser. Mais ils ont un rôle qui est quelquefois, qui a des effets pervers en ce sens que non seulement ils proposent de l'information, mais qu'ils y font leur beurre, ce qui est d'une certaine manière... mais quelquefois, un certain nombre de fois, on peut estimer qu'ils poussent un auteur pour des raisons qui sont des raisons d'intérêt personnel et pas nécessairement pour des raisons de qualité intellectuelle ou esthétique, vous voyez. Il y a un certain nombre de choses qui jouent dans ce sens là. Quelque fois de manière un peu négative, ça alourdit un peu le fonctionnement. Et quelques fois je dirais même que les agents littéraires parasitent un petit peu." (Marco Guglielmi)

"Mais surtout, ceux qui interviennent aussi, c'est les agents... c'est la plaie, les agents.

*Pourquoi la plaie?*

Parce qu'ils compliquent tout inutilement. Ils servent à rien, à mon avis, les agents, et... ils servent qu'à faire monter les prix inutilement. Par exemple, ce que je vous disais sur les achats de droits, ça c'est une intervention des agents qui font monter la sauce... je trouve que c'est un intermédiaire un peu inutile. Si les éditeurs faisaient bien leur boulot, s'ils avaient des gens un peu ouverts sur l'étranger, qui parlent beaucoup de langues, ils auraient pas besoin d'agents... c'est parce que les auteurs prennent des agents en pensant qu'ils vont obtenir plus. Mais si un auteur est un peu intelligent, qu'il s'occupe un tout petit peu de... bon, je parle pas des auteurs de best-sellers qui deviennent des PME, dans les PME il faut bien qu'il y ait des gens qui s'occupent de la comptabilité... mais, sinon, un auteur qui se vend correctement, il a pas besoin d'un agent. Il y a aussi la mode des agents, il y a beaucoup d'agents.

*En Italie aussi?*

Oui, il y en a beaucoup. Moi là j'ai tout le temps des agents qui m'envoient des e-mails, qui m'envoient des bouquins... Je travaille pas... ça m'intéresse pas..."  
(Sylvain Renucci)

These three examples illustrate the common perception that agents act in function of their own economic interest, which happens to be in contradiction with that of the publishers. In fact, the agent's commission is proportional to the *à-valoir* (the anticipated sum to be deducted from the profits). His interest is, thus, to negotiate the highest possible fee, whereas the French publisher wants to lower it. According to the French publishers, another problem with agents pertains to the absence of direct relations with their foreign colleagues. Firstly, this means that the French publishers have to deal with people who are not engaged in the same work, and thus are not aware of the problems specific to the profession. There is no mutual comprehension between agents and publishers, each party tries to protect their own interests, which tend to diverge. Moreover, the absence of direct relations with Italian publishers slows down the functioning and the expansion of the networks mentioned above. More concretely, there is no contact between the two publishers, not even for the signature of the contract.

"Donc, les droits, je les ai achetés par les correspondants français de l'Agence littéraire internationale, le représentant de Sellerio en Italie. En France, c'est la Nouvelle agence. Donc, on a signé un contrat de vente de droits pour, je crois, dix ans, et à partir de là c'est parti sur le travail de traduction." (Yves Tessarin)

Here, it is clear that Yves Tessarin has had no contact with Sellerio,<sup>1</sup> even though a significant part of the Italian books he has published come from his colleague's catalogue. In other cases, even if the contract is signed directly with the Italian publishers, they do not offer more opportunities in terms of networking:

"Moi j'ai de rapports qu'avec une seule maison d'édition, parce que je publie chez eux, c'est la Feltrinelli... moi j'ai des rapports... c'est même plus moi, en fait. C'est une lettre, neutre, à la personne qui s'occupe des droits. On voudrait acheter les droits, on vous propose tant, oui, non..." (Jacques Laplace)

***Competition with other publishers***

Another key element in the analysis of the signing of contracts between publishers (whether agents are involved or not) is the competition for the books. This happens when several publishers have heard about a book and have decided to buy it, for the reasons presented above. In this case, the economic question prevails: the publisher who is able to pay a higher price is more likely to obtain the contract.

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<sup>1</sup> Here, l'Agence littéraire internationale plays the role of intermediary between the two publishers, and thus that of the author's agent.

"Et puis nous avons, bien sûr, fait une offre à l'éditeur, qui est revenu en me disant qu'il en avait aussi eu une d'un autre éditeur, un concurrent important dans le domaine de la littérature étrangère... Et nous étions tellement convaincus que nous n'avons pas lâché le morceau, si je puis dire, et nous avons fini par obtenir notre contrat." (Thierry Durel)

This publisher works in a quite big house, with significant economic means. The expression '*nous n'avons pas lâché le morceau*', means that they continue to bid until no one pulls out. The nature of the competition also depends on the book. There are two specific issues in this regard, namely when the author is young, or when he has already published best-sellers.

"Là où on doit aller vite, c'est quand c'est un jeune auteur, un nouvel auteur. C'est là vraiment où la rapidité de notre travail, l'efficacité de notre travail, est à l'épreuve. Là on doit aller vite, on doit aller plus vite que nos confrères. Et on doit aussi faire une offre qui convainc l'éditeur ou l'agent en face." (Jean Dupasquier)

"Pour l'Italie ça se passe assez bien, il y a pas de problème. Sauf pour des best-sellers. Sur C., la lutte est au couteau. C'est une histoire à épisodes. Les contrats avaient été envoyés pour quatre livres, je les ai signés. Ils ne m'ont pas été retournés, et ils m'ont annoncé que, non, tant pis, ils vendaient à F., parce que F. c'était quand même plus sexy... tout était d'accord. Parce que, quand vous recevez un contrat à signer, ça veut dire que tout est en ordre. Moi j'ai retourné mon contrat... on fait signer à celui qui achète. Moi j'ai retourné mes contrats signés, et je n'attendais que le retour avec la signature de l'auteur. Puisque si le contrat m'avait été envoyé, c'était que tout était en ordre et tout était d'accord. Et là-dessus, JMR est allé voir madame... madame Sellerio, il a fait le joli cœur, et elle s'est laissée séduire." (Marianne Grange)

These constitute two diverse situations of competition. In the first case, that of a young author who is unknown in France, the Italian publisher (or the agent) is anxious to sign a contract because he is afraid that he might not be able to sell it. If the reception of the book in Italy was favourable, it is likely that several French publishers will have heard of it and will want to buy the rights. In the second case, the stakes are higher as the book is likely to be successful. Therefore, having it in the catalogue can make a fundamental difference for a publisher, especially small or medium-sized ones. One best-seller usually offers the liberty to publish books that will not sell well, but with a higher symbolic value, and thus to retain to the "literary objective" of the publishing house (see next section). In the second excerpt above, the small publisher is caught unaware by a bigger publisher, who offers more for the contract. It is interesting to note that the justification Marianne Grange gives is that the other publishers '*fait le joli cœur*' with the Italian publisher: she does not use the economic explanation to justify why she did not get the contract. By doing this, she avoids admitting that she did not have the economic means to make a higher bid. However, she explains that she had almost signed the contract, which represents a different situation where the other publishers continues with the auction even though it is supposed to be over. This provides evidence of the absence of explicit rules as regards the negotiation of rights. As far as best-sellers are concerned, another point to mention is that there is a clear inflation of

the price of the rights, and it seems that this hides more important questions, such as the quality of the work of the French publishers:

"Et donc, le Fleuve Noir ils ont tout de suite marché ... et donc ce qui est drôle c'est qu'ils ont acheté le premier, ils ont payé 5000 francs pour l'achat des droits. Et le dernier, ils ont payé 220 000 francs. Ce que je trouve aberrant, d'ailleurs, cette inflation sur les droits d'achat, c'est stupide parce que de toutes façons c'est des avances et c'est évident que si le livre se vend très bien ils toucheront de l'argent en tous cas, et que la question... la première question que devrait se poser un éditeur italien quand il vend son livre en France, ou un français quand il vend son livre en Italie, c'est pas d'avoir la plus grosse avance le plus vite possible, mais d'avoir affaire à un éditeur dont c'est sûr qu'il fera très bien son travail, qu'il aura une bonne traduction, et qu'il aura une bonne distribution, et il faut poser des questions sur la promotion du livre, sur comment ça va fonctionner, et tout ça... ça c'est du vrai travail d'éditeur. C'est pas, vite, prendre le plus de fric possible, parce que si l'éditeur fait très bien son travail, les droits ils rentrent, et ils rentrent encore mieux." (Sylvain Renucci)

Sylvain Renucci highlights the fact that the question of rights is a false one, to the extent that the book is expected to make money and if the profits on the books are high enough afterwards, then the value of the rights does not make any difference. However, if the book does not sell well, then the amount paid in becomes important. The negotiation of rights is very important, at least at a symbolic level, because it determines which publisher will sign the contract. Usually, the publishers interested in the book decide on a maximum sum that they are willing to spend, and this decision is based on an estimation of the number of copies that the book will sell.

*"Et sinon, comment ça se passe, elle vend un livre..."*

Oui, après elle vend au plus offrant, je pense. C'est pour ça que moi j'avais peur de pas avoir ce texte, parce que je me disais, si elle monte à 100 000 francs, par exemple, on le prendra pas, parce que on pourrait même pas rentrer dans nos frais, voilà.

*Donc, en général, vous décidez un prix maximum ?*

Oui, parce que il faut voir à combien l'auteur peut se vendre, malgré tout ; je crois que c'est pas infini, surtout pour le quatrième livre. Bon, je connais pas les ventes que fait Erri de Luca maintenant, mais bon. Voilà."

(Claudine Plessier)

This gives an overview of the different issues at stake in the process of negotiation.<sup>1</sup> One of the outcomes of this analysis is that the competition for rights is getting increasingly harder, especially as more and more money is involved. This economic constraint has a strong influence

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<sup>1</sup> An important detail that we have failed to mention is the complications that arise when authors have been dead for over 50 years, and it is not always easy to know who owns the rights. The following anecdote shows what can happen when no publisher is not in possession of the rights *a posteriori*: "J'ai commencé... bon, on a fini par partager avec le Seuil l'édition de G. qui est, comme vous pouvez l'imaginer, extrêmement lourde, coûteuse, difficile... qui pose des problèmes, tout ça. Donc, on travaillait tranquillement avec les éditions Garzanti. Et à un certain moment, je ne sais pas pour quelle raison, Garzanti n'a plus eu les droits de G.. Et donc j'ai appris, après bien des recherches, que c'était la gouvernante de G. qui avait repris les droits et qui avait confié ça à un avocat. Donc, je suis allé voir l'avocat à Rome qui a commencé à m'expliquer... bon, il ne l'a pas dit directement mais il m'a fait comprendre qu'au fond si j'arrivais avec une petite valise remplie de billets, les choses pourraient s'arranger comme ça. Donc j'ai dit ni oui ni non, évidemment, mais je suis rentré à Paris, j'ai vu Charles Chevallier je lui ai dit, écoutez, c'est très bizarre la situation avec G... et moi, en plus je me disais, si... d'abord c'est pas légal, on peut pas se permettre de faire ça, en plus si on le faisait le type pourrait très bien prendre la valise... à mon avis ce monsieur escroquait cette malheureuse gouvernante qui y connaissait certainement rien. Puis les choses sont rentrées à la normale, et donc Garzanti a repris les droits et les choses se sont passées de manière beaucoup plus simple." (Jacques Laplace)

on the editorial decisions, as it creates an uncompressible limit, in particular for small publishers. For big publishers with high economic capital, the negotiation of rights can constitute a guarantee of success: if there is a fight for a book, it is a sign that it is of interest and will sell well. It could also testify to the high literary quality of the book, but in all the examples given by the interviewees the issue was the economic success rather than the symbolic value, which leads us to the conclusion that the increase of the economic stake in the negotiation of rights enlarges the gap between the two poles of the publishing world, symbolic and economic. It is as if there were two types of books, those for which there is a competition for the acquisition of the rights and that are likely to become commercial successes, and the others, whose rights are much cheaper and that the publishers want to buy because they fit in their catalogue, or even in their intellectual project of publication.

#### 1.4. Choosing the translator

##### *Loyalty*

Once the publisher or the head of the collection has bought the rights to a book, the actual publication process can start. The translation phase is specific to foreign literature and it is part of the transformation of the manuscript into a book and the creation of a new text. In this respect, the choice of the translator and the quality of translation are extremely important as a poor translation may destroy a book reputation, whereas a good one can strengthen its qualities. Some of the publishers seem to find it difficult to find competent individuals to translate from Italian.

"Bah, le choix des traducteurs se pose relativement peu, parce que il y extrêmement peu de traducteurs de l'italien. Il y en a encore moins de bons... j'ai même essayé parfois de trouver d'autres personnes, ça c'est mal passé." (Jacques Laplace)

We have already dealt with this idea of a lack of good translators, which was widespread until the beginning of the 1990s (Chapter 4). Recently, however, the number of translators from Italian into French has increased. Nevertheless, most publishers tend to work with the same translators, which often constitutes a very small group.

"Vous avez combien de traducteurs avec qui vous travaillez?  
Moi j'en ai, actuellement, à la limite 4, trois maximum."  
(Jacques Laplace)

"Nous travaillons toujours avec les mêmes traducteurs, avec lesquels nous avons l'habitude de travailler, dont nous connaissons le travail.  
Vous en avez combien?  
Combien, je ne peux pas vous dire. 4 ou 5."  
(Anna Moresco)

"Vous avez des traducteurs qui travaillent pour vous régulièrement?"

En italien c'est Nathalie, toujours."  
(Jérôme Dupuy)

"Bon, quand un traducteur ne peut pas, pour des raisons de calendrier, on... on change, on en prend un autre, mais en tout cas, disons que nous on fonctionne avec un petit volant de traducteurs avec lesquels les directeurs de collection on l'habitude de travailler, avec lesquels il n'y a aucun souci dans la coordination des textes, bon, voilà." (Claudine Plessier)

"Ces derniers temps on tourne avec 5 - 6, facilement. Oui, entre Delphine Vasseur, Chantal Moiraud, Paul Matonti, Angelini... oui, facilement cinq ou six... oui, voire 6 ou 7. C'est toujours un peu les mêmes, et c'est vrai que je reçois des CV tout le temps, je les mets de côté. Et je les mets réellement de côté, et le jour où j'ai un trou dans mon planning de traduction je les appelle. C'est arrivé, par exemple, pour ce livre de Feltrinelli dont je vous ai parlé, euh... on a fait appel à un traducteur, Damien Leclerc, avec lequel on n'avait jamais travaillé. Dans ce cas-là, sauf urgence absolue, on demande un essai."  
(Jean Dupasquier)

From these extracts we can sense that it is much easier for these publishers to work regularly with the same translators, and that, when possible, they contact the people they are used to working with. They would only contact someone else would if none of the usual collaborators were available. However, this does not mean that publishers are not open to new translators. It is more a question of both the risk in terms of the quality of the translation and ensuring a smooth working relationship.

"Bon, si vous voulez, les traducteurs... vous savez, moi je publie que des traductions, je n'ai pas d'auteurs français, sauf justement B.C. qui est devenu le traducteur de T., mais ... j'ai des traducteurs, fidèles, des gens qui travaillent avec moi depuis longtemps, qui suivent un auteur.... ce qui ne veut d'ailleurs pas dire que je ne pourrais pas faire appel à de nouveaux traducteurs, c'est pas fermé." (Charles Chevallier)

"Pour l'italien, on n'en a pas énormément... disons que Bernard Simeone avait traduit pas mal de livres, quand même... ensuite, il y avait un petit groupe de traducteurs... puisque les deux directeurs de collection étaient basés en région lyonnaise, et que, par exemple Philippe Renard était à l'université de Grenoble et chapeautait un groupe de professeurs traducteurs. Donc, ça fonctionnait autour de ce groupe grenoblois, il y avait Hélène Leroy, tous ces gens. Ensuite, il y avait quelques spécificités, par exemple Muriel Gallot a traduit Bertolucci, parce que c'est un poète qu'elle connaissait... ça fonctionnait un peu comme ça, quoi. Et on continuera, si on continue à découvrir d'autres auteurs, on essaiera de proposer en priorité à ces traducteurs là, avec qui on s'est bien entendus, et bon, voilà. C'est logique."  
(Claudine Plessier)

"Donc, on est un peu incestueux, parce qu'on travaille toujours avec les mêmes, et c'est vrai... bon, on reçoit beaucoup de CV, et c'est uniquement quand les traducteurs avec lesquels nous avons déjà travaillé ne sont pas libres - ce sont de bons traducteurs, donc souvent ils travaillent toute l'année - qu'on fait appel à d'autres traducteurs. Alors, euh, là aussi, donc, le principe de fidélité, comme la politique d'auteur, est important. Donc, dans la mesure du possible, on essaye toujours de donner le même auteur au même traducteur. Dans le cas de nouvel auteur au catalogue, là aussi, parfois on a déjà des traducteurs qui nous ont appelé en nous disant, dans un mois je serai libre, s'il arrive quelque chose pensez à moi. Et on fait pourquoi? On fait ça parce qu'il y a pas pire que de revoir une traduction ratée. Donc, quand on a déjà travaillé avec des traducteurs, qu'on les connaît, qu'on sait qu'ils sont sérieux, solides, consciencieux, bon, naturellement on a tendance à leur confier des traductions nouvelles." (Jean Dupasquier)



The last interviewee clearly explains that "nothing is worse than working on a bad translation again". There is an idea that there are only a few good Italian translators. It is extremely difficult for a newcomer to break through, not so much because of the quality of his work, but rather because publishers do not have any particular interest in trying out new translators.

*When the publisher is looking for a translator...*

Despite the publishers' attachment to their usual translators, for many reasons there are cases in which they are obliged to find a new translator. It is very rare that they choose a translator just because they like their work.

"Et donc, je suis allé trouver une traductrice, qui s'appelle Monique Baccelli, qui habite pas loin, à 100km de Lyon... Donc je l'ai choisie, enfin, je suis allée la voir avec ce projet là, parce qu'elle avait traduit Fenoglio. Et j'aime beaucoup Fenoglio, donc voilà. Et Monique l'a lu, et elle m'a dit, c'est 19ème siècle, il y a des trucs un peu vieillots, mais c'est une très belle histoire... et c'est parti comme ça. Donc, il est arrivé que sur certains textes je choisisse un traducteur." (Yves Tessarin)

This situation is typical of a newly established publishing house that does not yet have a network of translators. In fact, the constitution of a network is essential for establishing relations with long-term collaborators. This mostly happens through the existence of personal relations between members of the publishing field of Italian literature in France.

*"Et pour la traduction, ça s'est passé comment? Vous l'avez choisi comment, le traducteur?"*

Et bien Sylvain Renucci voulait le traduire, mais il n'avait jamais traduit de l'italien. Il m'a dit « fais-moi confiance », et puis il est parti là-dedans. Et moi j'ai fait une petite révision, comme je fais d'habitude, et je n'ai trouvé d'erreurs que... c'était très bien traduit. Il n'y avait d'erreurs que quand c'était des tournures héritées de l'espagnol. Donc, on a fait une traduction qui tient." (Marianne Grange)

"J'en ai parlé à un ami que j'ai publié chez Julliard il y a une quarantaine d'année et chez Christian Bourgois après, il s'appelle Guillaume Chpaltine, il a vécu très longtemps près de Rome, puis à Rome, il est presque autant italien que français, il a lu ces livres de S. et il m'a dit que c'était bien, il les a traduits." (Charles Chevallier)

*"Et la traductrice, comment vous l'avez choisie?"*

C'est cette ancienne éditrice de chez Flammarion qui me l'avait présentée. Voilà, je trouve que c'est une traduction satisfaisante, fidèle au texte, qui est bien." (Jérôme Dupuy)

"Plus exactement, le premier roman de C. que j'ai traduit, on m'a demandé de le faire... L'éditeur m'a demandé de le faire parce qu'ils n'étaient pas satisfaits de la traduction qui avait été faite par un autre traducteur, ça ne marchait pas, donc ils ont demandé à... pour vraiment être bien précis dans la genèse, ils ont demandé à un de leurs traducteurs habituels, qui est Henri Jouvenet, qui est un collègue à moi, s'il voulait le faire. Comme lui n'était pas disponible, il m'a demandé si je voulais faire ce travail ; donc là-dessus j'ai fait un essai d'une dizaine de pages, ça a plu, donc j'ai signé mon contrat." (Danièle Perrineau)

In the first example, the publisher chose to trust someone with whom she has been friends for a long time (she explains it afterwards), and who became since then the point of reference of her publishing house regarding Italian literature. Conversely, the last extract shows how some contacts expand and can lead to new collaborations. The translator interviewed is now one of the main collaborators of this publishing house. In all of these cases, people are asked to translate because they know someone who is – directly or not – dealing with the publication.

"Bon, c'est le hasard... Quelqu'un vous dit, tu veux pas traduire ça... Bon, au début, j'avais été incluse il y a très longtemps dans une équipe qui traduisait Pirandello pour la Pléiade, donc je pense que les noms circulent." (Irène Thibaud)

This extract is interesting to the extent that the interviewee emphasizes the "casual" aspect by imprecise terms such as "*quelqu'un*", "*il y a très longtemps*" and "*une équipe*". She does not say who contacted her and that she worked on the translation of Pirandello a long time ago. Her statement conveys the idea that there are networks but that it is difficult to identify them and to decipher the way they function. The following extract shows opposite:

*"Et en gros, Jean Dupasquier, il a court-circuité le schéma classique qui est de faire appel aux traducteurs habituels pour vous proposer le bouquin directement?"*

Oui. Comme en plus ça se passait beaucoup en Allemagne, et quand on s'est connus j'avais peut-être plus de liens avec l'Allemagne qu'avec l'Italie, il s'est dit, bon, il faut quelqu'un qui est un peu à cheval entre l'Italie et l'Allemagne, je pense que ça a aussi été la raison pour laquelle il me l'a proposé. (...) C'est purement circonstanciel, et c'est purement un acte d'amitié qu'il m'a fait, parce qu'il se trouvait que je traversais un passage très particulier, assez dur, et il savait que j'avais besoin de beaucoup d'argent. Je vais vous le faire très très trivial! Il se trouve que la traduction de gros livres apporte beaucoup d'argent. Curieusement, beaucoup plus d'argent que si vous écrivez vous même un gros bouquin de 500 pages."  
(Damien Leclerc)

The interviewee admits that ended up translating this book for merely circumstantial reasons.<sup>1</sup> The evolution of this collaboration is interesting from our perspective as the book has been well received by both the critics and the booksellers, and it seems to be selling well, which means that the quality of the translation must meet the usual standards. The interviewee could use this opportunity as a springboard to start a career as an Italian translator by becoming part of the network of this publisher and becoming one of the usual collaborators.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the point here is to understand how networks are constituted, and according to which criteria the employment of

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<sup>1</sup> The contract is entirely based on the friendship between the translator and the publisher, which is a "strong tie" in the sense of Granovetter: "the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (Granovetter, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Granovetter argues that "A fundamental weakness of current sociological theory is that it does not relate micro-level interactions to macro-level patterns in any convincing way. (...) the analysis of processes in interpersonal networks provides the most fruitful micro-macro bridge" (1973: 1360). The example of Damien Leclerc is paradoxical from Granovetter's perspective, to the extent that professional opportunities usually emerge due to weak ties (with no emotional connotation). But for all the examples mentioned above, we are clearly dealing with weak ties, and Granovetter's scheme thus offers a tool for comprehension.

new translators occurs. The ambiguity of the existence of regular collaborators and the recruitment of new translators is nicely described by Marco Guglielmi as the "egg and chicken" story:

"Inversement, les maisons d'édition ont coutume de travailler avec un, plusieurs, traducteur, traductrice etc., qui ont déjà fait leurs preuves dans la maison, etc., et à qui ont proposé éventuellement en donnant un livre à lire... on dit, bon, on vient d'acheter les droits de tel bouquin, est-ce que ça vous irait? Alors, éventuellement, on le lit... il vaut mieux même le lire car parfois on est surpris. On lit le bouquin puis on dit oui ou non. Et on signe éventuellement un contrat. Ça présuppose, effectivement, que, pour qu'on ait une proposition de ce genre, qu'on a déjà travaillé, qu'on a déjà pris contact avec cette maison d'édition. Donc c'est le fameux problème de l'œuf et de la poule, lequel a commencé. Alors, là, il y a une espèce de zone grise qui est très difficile à déterminer et que tous ceux qui ont un peu l'expérience de ce genre d'activité ont eu l'occasion d'exposer à des néophytes qui ont le désir de traduire, qui ont le désir de s'insérer dans le circuit de la production éditoriale."  
(Marco Guglielmi)

An alternative for the publishers or the heads of collection, if they do not have established translators or because they are not satisfied with their current ones, is to "create" their own translators. This implies that they are translators themselves, which is a common occurrence, as we have seen.

*"Comment vous choisissez vos traducteurs?"*

Et bien, je les fais à ma main... en fait, là je fais travailler une traductrice que... j'en ai essayé deux... enfin, je dis "j'en ai essayé"... j'ai essayé de travailler avec pas mal de gens et ils se trouvent que c'est des femmes, des traductrices avec qui j'ai travaillé... mais en fait c'est très difficile parce que... disons que c'était des débutantes, en général, et en fait c'est difficile de trouver quelqu'un qui... d'abord, la première qualité c'est la modestie, quand on est traducteur... c'est d'accepter... et c'est une qualité que peu de débutants ont... je le sais parce que moi-même j'étais pas modeste... on accepte mal les critiques sur son travail, quoi. Et donc, j'ai travaillé avec plusieurs traductrices, et celle qui a le mieux compris, qui a le mieux travaillé, j'ai envie de la faire plus travailler. Donc, avec elle, je l'ai fait travailler sur l'anthologie, avec une autre, mais bon... moi je trouve que c'est normal qu'on fasse des erreurs, mais quand j'explique ce qui va pas une fois, deux fois, mais après si l'autre recommence à faire toujours la même chose, je dis, bon, elle a pas envie de faire ce que je lui dis... je peux pas travailler avec elle, voilà."

(Sylvain Renucci)

### *When the translator takes the initiative*

The translators often make spontaneous proposals to publishers to translate certain books. They are Italian books that they have discovered and would like to translate into French. The outcome of their proposal depends on their position in the field. If they are part of the network of one or more publishing houses, their suggestion is likely to be accepted. If they do not have any established links or networks, the task is more difficult and they have to find other ways of approaching the publishers. This is illustrated by Marco Guglielmi:

"Alors, d'abord, il est pas automatique que ce soit la personne qui propose un texte à une maison d'édition qui en sera automatiquement le traducteur. Ça peut se faire, ça dépend un petit peu de la nature des relations qu'il y a entre ce traducteur potentiel et telle ou telle

maison d'édition. On a ou pas l'habitude de travailler ensemble, on a ou pas déjà fait des traductions, etc. Et on peut espérer qu'on vous fasse confiance, par exemple. Ca peut se faire. C'est pas automatique." (Marco Guglielmi)

As we have seen above, the notion of trust appears to be very important in the relations between publishers and translators. Furthermore, once this relationship of trust has been established, it becomes clear that the task of proposing books is an integral part of the translator's work.

"En général, quand on propose un livre, on le traduit, c'est normal." (Laure Fougère)

Conversely, when the translator is unknown, it is a matter of luck if their proposal is accepted.

"Je lui ai écrit, je lui ai dit voilà, j'ai lu ce livre et j'aimerais le traduire. Au culot! Et il me répond, non, c'est gentil mais il y a quelqu'un qui est dessus en ce moment, c'est dommage... Et puis dans le courant de l'été je reçois une lettre à nouveau, de Bernard, me disant, écoutez, ça va pas du tout, il a absolument pas compris ce que c'était, voulez-vous m'envoyer un essai? Donc, évidemment, je me suis précipitée, j'ai envoyé un essai... j'avais déjà bien commencé pour m'amuser. Donc j'ai envoyé ça, et par retour de courrier il m'a dit, vous avez tout à fait compris, ok, c'est vous qui le faites." (Delphine Vasseur)

"Ecoutez, c'était une personne qui était venue me voir, parce que je m'occupe par ailleurs de la revue Europe, et qui m'avait dit, moi je serais intéressé par le traduire. Je lui ai fait faire un petit essai, je trouvais ça très bien. Il traduisait avec sa femme, c'est Jean et Marie-Noëlle Pastureau. Ils sont sérieux, donnons-leur leur chance. J'essaye toujours de donner des chances, d'une certaine manière, parce que moi-même j'ai eu la chance quand je suis arrivé à Europe d'être accueilli par des aînés, beaucoup plus âgés que moi, j'avais 25 ans à l'époque... je pense que souvent, il y a vraiment des blocages générationnels, et les gens sont attachés..." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

However, during the interviews, there are many examples of the opposite, for example when publishers are not convinced by the translators' request, or by their ability to translate the book in question.

"Vous savez, très souvent il y a des gens qui viennent, des traducteurs, des étudiants, qui disent "ah, je voudrais traduire ce livre", ils l'ont beaucoup aimé mais ils ne connaissent souvent rien... en général ils connaissent bien la littérature italienne mais ils n'ont pas un recul suffisant, et ils ne savent pas comment le livre va être perçu en France, et comment il va pouvoir être lu par d'autres personnes que des gens qui aiment la littérature italienne. Parce que c'est le problème que nous nous devons nous poser." (Paul Darlignac)

These people are not considered "ready" to enter the field, at least this is the underlying idea of Paul Darlignac's statement. The usual way to become accepted is to approach the publishing houses slowly, to progressively gain their trust and to acquire the necessary skills for literary translation. The first step usually involves becoming a reader and writing reviews of Italian novels.

"Il y a si vous voulez la démarche qui est fréquente aussi et qui consiste à faire par exemple des fiches de lecture pour telle ou telle maison d'édition. On donne des comptes-rendus en deux-trois pages sur des bouquins qui sont proposés pour l'achat par tel ou tel éditeur. Et puis il peut se faire que si on manifeste comme ça un certain nombre de qualités sur le plan, je sais pas moi, la connaissance linguistique, culturelle etc. ... qu'un beau jour le directeur de

collection vous dise "est-ce que ça vous irait de le traduire", etc. Mais c'est d'une manière qui est extrêmement peu structurée." (Marco Guglielmi)

It should also be noted that there is a risk involved in proposing material that the publisher might as well consider your suggestion but offer the translation to someone else.

"Comment est-ce qu'on peut, par exemple, être reconnu, être accepté, même, sans nécessairement être reconnu, accepté par Gallimard, le Seuil ou Fayard, par exemple, en tant que traducteur. Ça c'est très difficile, il y a pas de réponse a priori. On peut faire des propositions, c'est-à-dire qu'on peut envoyer des propositions de traduction à un éditeur qu'on connaît pas en disant, voilà, j'ai lu un livre que je trouve très très bien, je vous propose deux chapitres pour que vous en preniez connaissance. C'est une démarche, mais c'est une démarche risquée contre laquelle j'ai toujours mis en garde mes étudiants en séminaire de traduction, parce que... il peut se faire, et ça arrive, que l'éditeur dise tiens tiens, il y a quelque chose d'intéressant... et qu'il confie la traduction à quelqu'un d'autre qui est plus connu, qui est plus chevronné, et avec qui on a l'habitude de travailler. C'est une raison pour laquelle il ne faut faire ces démarches que quand on a déjà un minimum de garanties..." (Marco Guglielmi)

In conclusion, it has been shown that becoming part of a network of one or several publishing houses is a gradual process, that requires the acquisition of skills, the respect of certain procedures (for instance, becoming a reader), the creation of links with some actors of the field (even though this is not indispensable in theory), and to a certain extent luck. Damien Leclerc and Delphine Vasseur represent the two extremes of the spectrum (pure hazard on the one hand, pure favouritism on the other). Ultimately, both of these translators have come to be recognised within the field and are free to pursue their career as translators of Italian.

### *The affinity between translators and authors*

A central element to understanding why publishers choose certain translators and not others is the affinity between these translators and the writers. In fact, the reason why a publisher hires a translator that he has already worked with is because they have a good working relationship. This means that if this publisher buys the rights to another book by the same author, they usually request the services of the same translator. This can also be understood as a form of affinity between the translator and the text, for several reasons.

"On a appelé la traductrice habituelle de l'auteur, parce que... Les titres ont tous été traduits par la même traductrice, et il était hors de question pour nous d'en changer. D'abord, l'auteur n'avait pas exprimé le souhait d'en changer, on savait qu'il y avait une grande confiance entre les deux, et puis surtout on trouvait que les textes étaient de grande qualité." (Jean Dupasquier)

"Dans le cas de B., bien entendu F.B. est devenue sa traductrice attitrée, parce qu'ils s'entendent bien, parce que F.B. traduit très bien... je crois qu'elle a vraiment capté la voix de son auteur... donc, là il est normal que ce soit le même traducteur qui assume, si possible, l'ensemble..." (Thierry Durel)

In these two cases, the publishers are aware that the translator has shown that they are capable of translating the author, and in this way they have already proved themselves. In the big publishing houses, there are some people who are directly responsible for matching translators and texts.

"Avec ma collègue du bureau d'à côté, qui s'occupe des relations avec les traducteurs, nous en parlons et nous... oui, elle va dire, "ce livre-là", dit-elle, "je le verrais bien avec telle ou telle personne". Alors, elle va prendre contact avec la personne... Si le traducteur est libre, n'est pas pris pour les trois années à venir... ou alors, quand on ne connaît pas, le pedigree du traducteur, il peut y avoir aussi une sorte d'essai, si vous voulez, où il est de l'intérêt commun du traducteur et de l'éditeur de voir ensemble si, comment dire, si le traducteur va se sentir à l'aise avec le texte qu'il est censé rendre en français." (Thierry Durel)

In addition, the translator is often chosen based on their knowledge of the subject of the book (such as a geographical place or an event).

"C'est une traductrice qui, pour des raisons familiales, connaît très bien la guerre d'Espagne. Ce livre relate aussi la guerre d'Espagne, et donc nous avons pensé que cette traductrice serait la plus performante. (...)

*Vous choisissez toujours en fonction d'un intérêt particulier pour le livre?*

Oui, d'un intérêt, ou de certaines affinités qui peuvent se manifester entre le traducteur et... le texte, et l'auteur aussi. Et donc, comme ça, de façon imprécise, on dit, bon, tel livre pourrait être plus adapté à telle personne.

*Vous leur faites faire des essais?*

Nous faisons faire des essais aux traducteurs avec lesquels nous ne travaillons pas. Quand c'est un auteur dont nous connaissons le travail, non, ce n'est pas nécessaire. Le traducteur lit ce livre, dit s'il l'aime, s'il a envie de le traduire, et puis ensuite..."

(Anna Moresco)

From these observations, it can be concluded that the underlying condition for selecting a translator is based on their competence to produce a good translation, which will not discredit the original text. The idea of loyalty to a translator is a common feature of most of the interviews with publishers, for reasons that pertain to the notion of risk, such as the possibility of having to correct a bad translation (in some cases, to revise the complete text), and also the risk of having problems relating to deadlines, organisation, and management of new translators. This leads to the constitution of networks of collaboration that are quite stable (to the extent that it is possible). The recruitment of new collaborators is strongly determined by their role in the field of publishing (of Italian literature), as they are usually introduced to the publishers by former colleagues and other members of the field.

### 1.5. Launching the book

#### *Promotion*

Once the book is ready, it is put on the market. However, apart from simply sending it to book shops, the publisher is also in charge of the promotion surrounding it.

"C'est bien d'avoir une bonne idée mais ça ne suffit pas. Un livre qui ne marche pas est un livre mort". (Alain Cohen)

"On peut faire des lancements, on peut ne pas en faire, on peut faire des petits lancements, des grands lancements, enfin, essayer de ne pas se tromper et de donner sa meilleure chance au livre. Comment dirais-je, la façon de lancer un livre commercial et un livre littéraire ne sont pas les mêmes. Bon. Voilà, donc il y a une inconnue, et c'est vrai que... vous avez par exemple, très souvent, par rapport à l'ensemble de ce qui se publie en Italie, on peut très bien renoncer et dire non, ça n'est pas suffisamment, ou trop, particulier, ou régionaliste ou ceci cela... pour qu'on prenne le risque d'essayer de le faire passer de l'autre côté, chez nous. Il y a des choix à faire, c'est ça que je veux dire." (Thierry Durel)

It is clear that publishers have many options regarding the book launch. Here, the original language is relevant as the promotion of an Italian novel should not be the same for an American one, for instance. The book needs to be presented within the context in which it was written. The lack of knowledge of this context by the people who are in charge of the promotion often leads to misleading information.

"Il y a la présence d'un esprit mercantilo-publicitaire qui à mon avis fait beaucoup de dégâts dans l'édition. On pense à faire des coups, on parle beaucoup en termes de promotion, de publicité, de qu'est-ce qui va accrocher les représentants... si les représentants n'aiment pas ci, n'aiment pas ça... et puis on a affaire souvent à des gens qui ont une culture, bon, une culture générale assez faible, en réalité... qui ont une culture de commerciaux. C'est un métier qui est envahi par les commerciaux et c'est des gens qui peuvent vendre des savonnettes ou des bouquins. Par moment on a l'impression qu'ils ont pas lu un bouquin dans l'année." (Sylvain Renucci)

Sylvain Renucci accuses the sales representatives of selling all of the books the same way, and even of selling them as any commercial product (as opposed to a noble conception of literature). This is coherent with the recent evolutions of the publishing world, especially the increasing commercialisation of the communication and the diffusion of books. However, promotion is also done through other channels, such as the media, bookshops, and to a certain extent, some cultural institutions.

"Les critiques sont attentifs... en tout cas, pour moi le *Monde*, les *Inrocks*, *Libé*, parfois *L'Express*, le *Temps*, un journal de Genève, sont très attentifs. Ils parlent beaucoup, consacrent des pages, font des interviews..." (Charles Chevallier)

"Oui, c'est aussi critiqué, mais la critique sur deux pages c'est très bien, il y a, mettons, une demie-page de critique sur deux. Ce qui est mal, c'est le silence, c'est l'ignorance. C'est-à-dire, faire semblant que le livre n'existe pas, comme l'a fait *Télérama*, *Télérama* est très lu, ils ont un impact important, surtout pour les livres, et ça c'est remarquable comme silence." (Jean-Charles Zilio)

"Il y a quand même quelques critiques quand les livres sortent. Il y en a eu énormément ces derniers-temps parce que c'était le salon du livre... mais qu'est-ce que fait la critique pour faire lire un livre... je suis assez... non, c'est vrai que... je me souviens que les ventes avaient explosé quand il y avait eu cet article dans *Télérama* ... bon, apparemment c'était les lecteurs de *Télérama*. De temps en temps il y a un impact grâce à un article. C'est compliqué." (Delphine Vasseur)

The last statement conveys the idea that the impact of newspapers articles on the success of a book is not automatic. In fact, there is no way of measuring this impact. Furthermore, it largely depends on what the publisher can do in addition. We must keep in mind that many Italian novels are published by very small publishers with limited economic means. The following two extracts offer different conceptions of the relevance of articles in the press:

"Donc on se retrouve... non pas que lui il joue de ça, c'est pas ça, je mets pas ça en cause, mais si les trois ou quatre personnes qui écrivent dans les journaux importants, journaux et hebdomadaires, ne s'intéressent pas à tel ou tel auteur, c'est fini, il y a rien, il se passe rien. C'est vraiment... je dis pas que c'est l'échec total, parce que un livre peut exister même sans ça, mais enfin ça pose des problèmes, véritablement." (Jacques Laplace)

"Il y a eu une couverture presse assez importante pour un éditeur comme la Fosse aux Ours, mais de toutes façons globalement c'est pas ce qui fait vendre un livre, sauf des choses spectaculaires, Canal +, pour la France, ou des gens comme Michel Pollack, bon... même si Pollack en a parlé, une campagne de presse pour une petite maison d'édition ça intervient sur un trop long temps pour faire effet de masse... il y a jamais cette impression d'effet de masse... et ce sont les libraires qui se sont emparés de ce bouquin..." (Yves Tessarin)

According to Jacques Laplace, a book cannot be successful if it is not reviewed by one of the people who write about Italian literature in the daily newspapers. Conversely, in the second extract, the role of the media was not considered relevant to the success of the book, according to its publisher, to the extent that he is not able to "resist on the distance". For small publishing houses, if the (relative) success is not immediate, the economic constraints make it impossible for them to go on with the promotional work, due to high costs.

### *Channels of diffusion*

"Ensuite, les libraires... bon, moi je vais beaucoup en province en ce moment, j'ai beaucoup d'admiration pour les grandes librairies de province qui n'ont fait que se développer. J'étais à Brest, j'étais au Havre, j'étais à Rouen, à Bordeaux, à Toulouse. C'est des librairies admirables, moi je suis frappé par la quantité de très bons livres qui paraissent." (Charles Chevallier)

"Le livre a été formidablement bien accueilli ici, notamment par un noyau de libraires littéraires qui l'ont sélectionné dans leur panel en disant que c'était l'un des meilleurs romans étrangers de la rentrée pour eux, ce qui a assuré un succès non négligeable des ventes, puisque nous avons vendu près de 15000 exemplaires, ce qui n'est pas toujours le cas pour un roman traduit." (Thierry Durel)

"Et pour ce qui est de la X, pour aller jusqu'au bout du parcours du bouquin, on peut dire qu'il a suscité quand même des curiosités de la part des lecteurs, j'ai été appelée dans différentes bibliothèques et institutions culturelles pour exposer ma démarche." (Danièle Perrineau)

These three extracts show the importance of booksellers and librarians as actors in the promotion of books. The librarians' action is more symbolic than commercial, to the extent that they do not sell books, however, they certainly contribute to maintaining and spreading



information about book to the public. The bookshops' role is important as well but in a different way as they are the final element of the chain in distribution and promotion. In some cases, the authors participate at promotional events, and this also contributes to encouraging the sales of the book.

"On a fait venir l'auteur pour la promotion, et très vite on s'est rendu compte qu'à la fois la puissance du texte et aussi symboliquement, sans doute, le changement d'éditeur, nous a permis d'aller bien au-delà de ce que son ancien éditeur a pu obtenir en terme de couverture médiatique et de vente en librairie (...) L'auteur est même venu plusieurs fois pour faire des signatures en librairie... le dossier de presse a très vite été assez épais." (Jean Dupasquier)

All of the distribution channels are interdependent and there is no chronological order. They all contribute to the emergence of a debate (in a broad sense of the term) about the book. People speak about it, they know it exists, and this may encourage them to buy it, and/or read it. In fact, the book ultimately circulates by word of mouth (*bouche à oreille*).<sup>1</sup>

"Parce que je crois beaucoup à la prescription des rencontres, beaucoup plus que celle de la presse. Je me rends compte pour moi-même, je n'achète quasiment plus de livres pour la raison qu'il y a eu un article... et qui ont vraiment réussi à se constituer un public." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

It would be interesting to analyse more in detail the channels of distribution and diffusion of Italian literature in France, especially in light of the spectrum of the publishers involved, as described in chapter four. This leads us to the issue of the relation between the types of book-production and the types of actors involved (i.e., which type of distribution networks do the publishers belong to and what is the size of the publishing house). To this end, it will be necessary to analyse the representations referred to in the interviews: why do publishers present themselves in a certain way, what scale of values and representations does this relate to, and how is it interesting from our perspective?

## 2. REPRESENTATIONS

We have presented the various steps that lead to the publication of a book and the issues at stake for each step using the interviews as the only source. As we mentioned earlier, this means that we have to take into account the fact that we are dealing with indigenous representations of a working process. We can assume that the objectivation of the proper action is possible in some cases, not in others. For instance, counting the translators with whom the publishers collaborate on a regular basis allows little room for the interpretation of reality. Conversely, the description

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<sup>1</sup> We have already quoted Yves Tessarin using this expression.

of the criteria in book selection is, by definition, subjective and not objectifiable (or only to a small extent). One of the interests in working with in-depth interviews is to access this level of presentation of reality and interpret it in order to understand the representations, symbols and scales of values underlying the discourse. In order to complete this presentation of the mechanisms in the publication of Italian novels in France, we shall now look at the way the publishers present themselves and how they situate their action on the book market. It is argued that this will help us to understand the indigenous character of the publisher's representations of their action or, in other words, the meaning that they want to give to it.

## 2.1. Presentation of self

We mentioned in the previous section the importance of the myth, or model, of the *éditeur-découvreur*. It is clear from the way that the publishers present themselves that there is a often a will to explain that they are different, a will for *distinction*, in the bourdieusian sense of the term. For instance, they often insist on the necessity to be inventive. More frequently, they highlight the originality of their work.

"Mon souci c'est pas de me situer par rapport à ce qui fait en France, je m'en fous. Moi ce que j'ai envie c'est d'avoir ma démarche à moi, une démarche originale..." (Sylvain Renucci)

This idea of originality can also be presented as autonomy or independence:

"Vous savez, moi je ne suis pas très au courant de ce qui se passe au niveau global. Je suis quand même très schizophrénique! Pour faire de l'édition, si on se met à regarder exactement ce que font les autres, on fait plus rien. Parce qu'on se dit, de toutes les manières, j'ai eu tort. Donc on fait plus rien, on est paralysés. Tandis que si vous taillez votre petit bonhomme de chemin, vous voyez bien ce qui se passe. Je crois que tous les petits éditeurs fonctionnent de la même manière." (Marianne Grange)

Alain Cohen denounces the cowardice of the other publishers, who do not dare to take risks, in his opinion. He is proud of selling books at a lower price in comparison to the usual market prices. He presents this as a way of going against the general trend, or as not following any kind of fashion. Another feature of this will of distinction is the claim of spontaneity. Publishers often say that they do not make precise or long term plans as regards Italian literature (or any kind of literature, actually):

"Mais ce que je voudrais vous dire, c'est que moi je fais pas d'édition de manière planifiée, systématique, en me disant qu'il faut que je couvre tous les territoires. J'ai publié des italiens parce que je vais souvent en Italie, parce que j'ai des liens d'amitié..." (Charles Chevallier)

In other cases, the discourse is directly oriented towards spontaneity, presented as a capacity to improvise, to adapt to opportunities as they pop out.

"Bon, je n'ai pas réfléchi, j'ai sauté sur l'occasion. Pour un petit éditeur, il faut savoir être spontané, s'adapter, sinon on va droit dans le mur". (Yves Tessarin)

This idea of distinction indicates that every publisher tries to act differently, from what they implicitly define as normal, or to what they assume that others would do in the same situation. They seem to take it for granted that publishing houses decide upon an editorial line in advance and plan how many Italian novels they will edit during the year. This is quite paradoxical as no one admits that they make plans, however every one assumes that this is the case in other publishing houses. This shows that the fact of not making plans (i.e. being spontaneous, and this also applies to originality, independence, autonomy and so on) is valued by the publishers. From the way they present themselves in the interviews, they highlight this point in order to make sure that it was not missed. The scheme of action is quite open, and this is presented as something personal and unique. However, some of them are aware of the fact that all of the publishers follow this scheme (as the extract of the interview with Marianne Grange here above shows). Another dimension present in the representation is the passion for their job.

"Pour moi c'est pas simplement un gagne pain, c'est une véritable passion." (Paul Matonti)

"Donc, je pense que c'est toujours la volonté, la volonté passionnée d'un éditeur, ou des lois de marché, bon..." (Claude Muccino)

It often happened that during the interviews the interviewee admitted off the record that it is a difficult job, especially for small publishers, however their passion for their job means that they would never give up. The issue of the self representation of the profession is quite clear from the above extracts: being a publisher implies both to act as a manager and to make use of personal creativity. It is fundamental to note that this applies to rather small publishing houses, or at least those with some kind of independence (especially at the level of distribution). In other words, in line with Bourdieu, the small firms have more symbolic capital than economic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) and (Bourdieu, 1992). Throughout this section, we will try to point out how structural differences also reflect differences in the representations.

## 2.2. Editorial lines and orientations

We shall now look at how the publishers present their work and the choices that they make. The first question to ask is whether they refer to some kind of editorial line. According to what we showed in the previous paragraph, we do not expect publishers to have one. However, they often refer to it, either directly or indirectly.

"Alors, je pense que pour la littérature italienne, les éditeurs à la fois essayent de vendre et essayent de choisir des auteurs de qualité. A la fois, ils sont très contents. S'ils trouvent

qu'une partie, bon, ils sont contents aussi parce qu'ils font de l'argent. S'ils ont des écrivains de qualité qui se vendent pas du tout, bon, ça c'est plus emmerdant.*[he laughs]*." (Henri Jouvenet)

*"Et dans ce cas, comment vous choisissez l'éditeur?"*

Par rapport à ce qu'ils publient, si ça rentre bien dans leur politique. Et puis, aussi, par affinité, ceux avec qui je m'entends le mieux, ceux avec qui il y a un vrai dialogue. En général, par rapport à la politique éditoriale. Au Promeneur, je vais leur proposer du classique, pas un jeune auteur. (...) Bon, beaucoup au Seuil, mais je propose à d'autres éditeurs, quand même. Parce que, bon, Martine elle publie 4 ou 5 livres par an, et puis elle a quand même une ligne éditoriale précise, il y a des auteurs... par exemple, là il y a un auteur que j'essaie de placer, il est mort. Je sais que ça l'intéresse pas, je vais le proposer à d'autres." (Laure Fougère)

These two extracts are taken from interviews with translators. The first the way he believes publishers deal with Italian literature (they try to combine economic and literary success), however, this could apply to the publication of any novel as it is in no way specific to Italian. In the second extract, Laure Fougère assumes that the publishers she usually works with has a precise editorial line, although she does not explain which kind. She refers to some kind of unity of the catalogue, however publishers do not admit that they have an editorial line as regards Italian.<sup>1</sup> At the most, publishers try to define a framework as regards foreign literature in general.

"Il n'y a pas de politique. Bon, je pense que vous allez voir tous les éditeurs sur la place de Paris, je crois qu'il n'y a aucune politique éditoriale dans le domaine italien spécifique. Aucune maison ne vous dira, oui, moi j'ai telle politique, je veux publier telle ou telle chose. Il y a une politique éditoriale sur l'étranger dont l'Italie fait part, mais je ne pense pas qu'on puisse parler aujourd'hui de politique spécifique en ce qui concerne la littérature italienne, l'introduction de la littérature italienne en France." (Guido Pierucci)

"La première chose, si vous voulez, la première chose que je voudrais souligner, c'est qu'Albin Michel est une grande maison d'édition, comment dirais-je, traditionnelle et généraliste, c'est-à-dire que notre politique de traduction par rapport à l'italien est la même que celle que nous avons pour l'espagnol, le japonais, le turc ou l'anglais, etc. Je veux dire que nous ne sommes pas un éditeur spécialiste, nous n'avons pas de collection particulière, sinon celle des "grandes traductions" qui regroupe l'ensemble des domaines linguistiques de la planète, en tout cas en principe." (Thierry Durel)

"Vous savez, moi je fais de la littérature... étrangère, un peu tous azimuts, et surtout de la littérature sud-américaine. Et je dois dire que les italiens que je connais, je les connais par l'intermédiaire des latino-américains, parce qu'il y a des liens très particuliers entre l'Italie et l'Amérique Latine." (Marianne Grange)

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<sup>1</sup> Yet, in one of the letters that was written to ask a publisher if he would agree to meet me for an interview, it was explained that it would really be useful to meet him because of the richness of his Italian catalogue. He kindly replied that he would receive me "to talk about his editorial line as regards Italy". This was surprising as this expression was not used in the letter. He himself moved from "catalogue" to "editorial line", whereas we had not used the latter expression on purpose. We did not want to take for granted that he had an editorial line. During the interview, he never mentioned it, but the fact that he put it in the letter probably means that the expression "editorial line" was used as idiomatic, or something more general than what it actually implies. Perhaps he thought this was what we wanted to hear. However, he did not say a word about it.

There is an interesting difference between the first two extracts on the one hand and the last one on the other: Guido Pierucci and Thierry Durel both work in large commercial publishing houses, and both clearly say that they have a policy on foreign literature. In the case of Thierry Durel, it is even more striking as we had just asked him to tell us about one of the Italian novels that he had published, and he insisted on presenting the editorial policy of the house he works for as a preamble to his answer. Marianne Grange, who is at the head of a small structure, does not use the term "policy", her discourse is not constructed in the same way, and reminds us of the idea of *distinction* as presented above: she publishes Italian literature somehow by chance, because other interests led her to it. This difference in the discourses can be related to different self representations. However, the difference is not simply between big and small publishing houses, we also need to take into account another dimension that pertains to symbolic prestige.

"Il n'y a aucune politique des quotas, on ne fixe pas à l'avance le nombre de titres qu'on va publier en espagnol, en italien, en anglais, c'est en fonction de la qualité des titres que l'on trouve. Après, c'est vrai, on essaye de construire un équilibre éditorial, etc., par rapport... c'est-à-dire, chaque mois on doit avoir un programme cohérent, avec des titres qui ne se font pas inutilement concurrence en librairie, qui sont plutôt complémentaires les uns par rapport aux autres, et qui permettent aussi à l'attachée de presse et à la maison en général d'arriver à distinguer les titres en librairie, pour avoir une visibilité. Si vous voulez, notre but c'est d'avoir une visibilité maximum pour chaque titre. Et en fonction de ça moi j'essaie de construire un programme, et c'est vrai qu'on arrive en gros au même nombre de titres... enfin, souvent, par domaine linguistique. C'est un peu des habitudes de travail, et puis le fruit de notre expérience, voir ce qui passe, ce qui passe pas. Mais il y a vraiment aucun quota fixe au départ, donc l'italien ça peut quand même varier d'une année sur l'autre." (Jean Dupasquier)

The publishing house that Jean Dupasquier belongs to is both big in size (in terms of the number of employees, and the number of books published yearly) and it is very prestigious.<sup>1</sup> Jean Dupasquier's description of their policy contains both the idea of editorial balance and that of the absence of prevision. This means that the discourse is linked to the type of publishing house that the interviewee belongs to according to two axes: the first one opposes commercial and symbolic houses (and existence/absence of a defined editorial line. The second one opposes big and small houses (and planning/not planning).

Beyond the strict idea of an editorial line, we can examine the way that the publishers present their choices through the filter of more general orientations – which may be political, ethical, thematic and literary.

"Il y avait des choses qui nous tenaient à cœur... certains d'entre nous sont hispanisants, et on trouvait que l'Espagne... pour de mauvaises raisons, d'ailleurs, à cause du franquisme, la littérature espagnole proprement dite avait été pendant des années, des décennies même, boudée en France. Donc, on traduisait pas ces écrivains que sont Delibes, on les avait

<sup>1</sup> See next section for more details on the nature of this prestige.

abandonné... parce que le public français, bon, se détournait de l'Espagne au profit de l'Amérique Latine... donc, on s'est dit, bon, on va pas faire l'Amérique Latine pour toutes ces raisons, par contre, nous, l'Espagne, il y a des choses qu'on a envie de dire, il y a des écrivains qu'on a envie de sortir de l'ombre. Voilà, si on peut, on va faire ça. Et donc, le projet italien, qui a été le premier projet proposé, effectivement ça allait tout à fait dans notre idée de faire ce lien avec nos voisins de la Méditerranée. C'était logique, plutôt que d'adopter des langues, soit que tout le monde publie, soit qu'on maîtrise pas." (Claudine Plessier)

In this way, the motivation for publishing Italian literature is political (in a broad sense). On the one hand, the desire to rediscover Spanish literature after it was discredited by the Franco period. On the other, a more global project of participating in the construction of a Mediterranean identity (this publishing house is based in the South of France, and it is very close to the Mediterranean seaside).

"Ici, c'est particulier. Vous allez voir certainement plusieurs maisons comme ça. C'est particulier parce qu'il y a une cohérence idéologique et politique très très forte. Bon, c'est une maison, traditionnellement, de gauche, qui ne publiera jamais aucun texte contraire aux convictions politiques de la maison. C'est une maison où il y a beaucoup d'universitaires, d'intellectuels de recherche. La plupart des directeurs de collection dans les sciences humaines sont des directeurs d'étude aux Hautes Etudes, ou des profs... il y a ... là vient de passer P.R. [*he points at the window*]... il y a des journalistes de télévision, mais bien sûr aussi des journalistes de réflexion, bon, lui il fait des émissions sur l'histoire et la politique. Donc il y a une tenue intellectuelle générale qui fait que c'est une maison qui n'est pas complètement commerciale." (Paul Darlignac)

The idea of a political project or coherence, is even more explicit in this case. It is not presented as an editorial line strictly speaking, but it undoubtedly influences the choices of publication. In other cases, the orientation is more thematic:

"Il y a quand même beaucoup d'auteurs qui comprennent qu'un marché étranger ne vit pas aux mêmes critères que leur propre marché. Sans dévoiler de secrets, un auteur que nous suivons, que nous continuerons à suivre, qui... dont nous avons publié deux titres, a plus de publications en Italie à son actif, dont un roman sur Toulouse-Lautrec, qui nous Paraissait, pour le public français, comment dire... à la fois être trop prêt d'une vision italienne du Paris de la belle époque, et puis surtout par rapport à ce qui existe en France sur Toulouse-Lautrec, ne rien apporter de neuf. Et l'auteur a très bien compris que la situation était très différente, à la fois pour des raisons culturelles, notre connaissance de Toulouse-Lautrec n'est pas la même, et puis surtout pour des questions de publications au sujet de son roman. Donc, on a laissé passer ce roman, et on continuera à le suivre, voilà." (Jean Dupasquier)

There is thus a specificity of the French market in terms of the themes of the books. This type of choices is not specific to this publishing house, it is probably a more general orientation, the selection of themes according to a certain set of constraints; for instance the books can be chosen in function of their relevance on the French market. As with the precedent orientation, this is part of the general definition of the editorial line of a publishing house.

A key dimension of this definition is that of a "mission". The interviewees often express the idea of a project which is close to that of the people we referred to as "middle-men" previously.

"Pour nous, dont le métier est de faire passer les choses, il fallait peut-être essayer de dire, en faisant ça, que les choses... le monde n'est pas aussi simple, c'est pas blanc et noir, c'est pas bien et mal, bon." (Claudine Plessier)

"Moi je suis pas du tout comme ça, je suis quelqu'un qui a une vision du temps à long terme, j'ai une profondeur du temps et j'ai essayé, disons, d'avoir une politique qui était de me dire, en fait, quelles sont les choses portantes qui n'ont pas encore été traduites et qui méritaient de l'être, je dirais sur tout le vingtième siècle. J'allais pas remonter au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance, parce que ça c'est un autre type d'édition, un autre type de travail. Disons, depuis l'époque du roman, fin 19ème début 20ème, je me suis dit, quelles sont les lacunes, j'ai raisonné comme ça. En me laissant la possibilité de voir, bien sûr, dans le plus contemporain, ce qui pouvait être plus significatif, intéressant. Donc, ce qui fait que par exemple qu'on a publié Bontempelli, sans aucun succès. D'autres éditeurs, d'ailleurs, l'ont fait. Il y a eu un travail assez assidu qui s'est développé pendant quelques années avant de totalement s'éteindre, puisque ça n'a eu aucun écho. Il faut dire que déjà vous avez un handicap au départ si vous publiez le livre d'un écrivain étranger mort." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

The recurrent idea in these extracts relates to the need to publish certain texts. The interviewees all belong to a publishing house with a minimum level of symbolic prestige, and this kind of discourse was absent from all of the interviews with members of big commercial houses (at the most, they would mention the literary quality of a book, but never the necessity of making a masterpiece available to the French public). We thus see that part of the self definition of the job of the *éditeur-découvreur* relates to the idea of a mission regarding literature in general, regardless of whether it is French or foreign. The underlying idea is that literature participates to the construction of references, not only cultural but also political and social. The publishers smuggle books across the borders and in this way, they help in building up all of these references that together constitute the cultural heritage of a country. Analysing book flows in this way helps us to answer the question of the international nature of literature: why is it international? why are foreign books published in France? However, this idea of a mission or project, is rather theoretical, and it can only be fully understood in its economic context, namely that of the book market.

### 2.3. The market

In the previous chapter, we presented the configuration of the field of publication of Italian literature in France. We mostly looked at the direct actors of this field, such as who they are and where they come from. We mentioned the existence of structural differences in the distribution and diffusion of books, thus situating the various publishing houses involved on an axis, with commercial houses, on the one hand, and symbolic ones on the other. Of course, this configuration is more complex. Bourdieu has illustrated this for the entire field of publishing

(Bourdieu, 1999), and therefore we do not need to go into details on this matter.<sup>1</sup> A first step in looking at the way the publishers refer to the market is to look at the distinction made between "small" and "big" publishing houses.

### *Small and big publishing houses*

"Bon, les petits éditeurs, bien sûr, ils ont plus de mal à fonctionner. Bon, X, quand ils font une traduction, ils demandent automatiquement une subvention au CNL, donc c'est plus long, ils vous paient moins. Bon, on l'accepte parce que ce sont des éditeurs qu'on aime bien et qu'on veut voir continuer, on veut voir leurs collections continuer, parce que c'est trop important ce qu'ils font. Et puis ils ont une rigueur de choix à laquelle ils dérogent jamais. Bon, ça, X, moi j'ai pas énormément traduit avec eux mais si ils me proposent, je fais quelque chose, c'est sûr." (Delphine Vasseur)

"Pour éditer des poètes qui ont un public restreint, des auteurs comme Manganeli, ou même certains Pasolini, etc., il faut tout de même pouvoir le faire, avoir des ressources suffisantes, et ne pas le faire de façon velléitaire, comme le font les petites maisons d'édition, qui ensuite disparaissent." (Paul Matonti)

In these extracts, we find the two dimensions mentioned above, symbolic and economic. The "small" publishing houses have symbolic prestige, at least within a group of specialists, because they have a project or a mission that deserves being supported. They have heavy economic constraints, as with any publishing house, but they are more often on a knife edge.

*"Et comment vous avez survécu, alors, vous?"*

L'obstination. Non, c'est vrai, comme je n'avais pas d'argent au départ j'ai pas pu faire de très grosses bêtises... j'ai vécu pendant 10 ans mal, en me payant mal et en travaillant seule, mais en construisant quelque chose. Après ça a marché. C'est les 10 premières années les plus dures. Un de mes confrères, qui a arrêté l'édition pour le cinéma, disait: "dans l'édition, ou il faut être de la famille, ou il faut être très riche, ou alors il faut avoir le temps; quand on est riche on économise 10 ans". Je peux vous dire, ces 10 ans-là, je les ai pas économisés! C'est très intéressant, ça vous apprend une certaine rigueur, ça vous apprend à travailler. C'est comme ça qu'on construit un catalogue. Un catalogue, il faut avoir du temps, il faut des auteurs qui vous soient fidèles, ça prend du temps." (Marianne Grange)

This extract shows that the fight for survival is harder for these publishing houses, as they have less resources. In other words, they are less able to compensate – at an economic level – the publication of texts with high symbolic prestige but that do not sell, with the publication of best-sellers, for instance, that provide enough resources for the freedom to experiment with other publications. The work is presented as a long-term process of creating a form of fidelity and loyalty with the authors. However, it is always precarious. Jean Dupasquier told us about an

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<sup>1</sup> From a data on a series of over 60 publishing houses, he presents a correspondence analysis and highlights several axes. One of them represents the structure of the capital of the houses (the lower a house is on the axis, the more important the part of its financial capital compared to its symbolic capital). Another axis opposes the publishers publishing very few translations, and mostly from rare languages, to those publishing many, often from English. The lower a house is on this axis, the more heavy are economic constraints, the more probable the tendency to publish commercial literature (*littérature à succès*).



author who changed publisher after ten books; he had been faithful to his publisher (with rather high symbolic capital and medium economic capital), but he decided to change, for several reasons. He moved to one of the biggest publishing houses which is very rich in both symbolic and economic capital. His motivations related both to the symbolic dimension and to economic features, as he had not been satisfied with the promotion and launching of his previous novels.

"Il faut savoir que les italiens sont très actifs, les éditeurs et les agents, parfois aussi, malheureusement pour nous, les auteurs, dans l'envoi. Alors, est-ce que c'est une particularité X.? Peut-être un tout petit peu, d'abord parce que notre directrice éditoriale a travaillé en tant qu'éditrice en Italie, donc elle a un passé là-bas, elle est connue. Donc ça explique pour une partie le nombre d'envois. Mais aussi, je crois que Gallimard représente, je dirais presque dans l'inconscient italien, quelque chose d'assez mythique aussi, pour une partie justement de la société italienne, et on a beaucoup beaucoup d'envois en direct. Donc, des auteurs qui, sans même demander à leurs éditeurs s'ils ont envoyé le livre, nous envoient le livre, avec une petite lettre." (Jean Dupasquier)

We can thus see that the house Jean Dupasquier works for is accredited with very strong symbolic capital, not only in France but also abroad (at least in Italy). This is an additional dimension that needs to be taken into account. This analysis shows how the economic constraint operates and contributes to the polarisation of the publishing world. The common feature with "big" publishing houses is the presence of a strong economic capital, but there are differences in terms of symbolic capital. However, there have been recent changes in the definition of priorities.

"Je connais ce monde-là pour l'avoir fréquenté depuis bientôt 25 ans. Je vois bien quels sont les intérêts, et les évolutions des éditeurs, aussi, euh... Gallimard aujourd'hui n'est pas le Gallimard d'il y a 25 ans. Le Seuil non plus, le Seuil a beaucoup changé depuis 5 ou 6 ans, ils ont une politique beaucoup plus commerciale en ce qui concerne la littérature, mais de façon extrêmement brusque. Une ouverture, aussi, vers le livre d'art, etc." (Paul Matonti)

This implicates that the houses accredited with high symbolic prestige have progressively moved interests. It used to be mostly literary and symbolic acclaim, whereas it is now strongly oriented by economic constraints.

### *The commercialisation of the book market: is it a necessity?*

The first thing to underline is the existence of costs which are specific to the publication of foreign literature.

"Alors c'est vrai qu'il y a un problème économique, dans le sens où si vous publiez un premier roman, un auteur français, l'éditeur va peut-être lui verser un à valoir, ça va pas chercher bien loin. Donc, s'il a pas beaucoup de succès, comme c'est probable, il va pas y laisser sa chemise. Si vous publiez un auteur italien, je dirais, pas forcément taillé pour faire un best-seller, vous avez: les droits à l'éditeur étranger, les frais de la traduction, bon, ça peut déjà tout de suite pousser loin. Donc c'est vrai que c'est un problème."  
(Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

"Allora, diciamo, se io vendo 600 copie di un libro... Per un editore francese, è molto più grave vendere 600 copie del libro di uno scrittore italiano che francese, perché... perché se è italiano, c'è la spesa della traduzione. Se io pubblico il romanzo di Poivre D'Arvor, mi costa quello che decido di dare come anticipo, come *à-va-loir*, etc. Se io traduco un libro di Andrea di Carlo, dovrò dargli l'anticipo e i diritti, ma anche dovrò pagare il traduttore. Che poi, in Francia, i traduttori sono, giustamente, pagati bene. E allora, tra i due, io scelgo quello per il quale non devo spendere per la traduzione. Questa è la differenza."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

These costs are due to the price of buying the rights and of the translation, and they thus cannot be reduced. There are incentives, mainly from the CNL (*Centre National du Livre*), however they do not apply to all translated books, of course, and they do not cover all of the additional costs. This factor strongly influences the choice of books, especially for small publishers, who are sometimes forced to take out loans.

"C'est quand même un livre énorme, qui fait 805 pages, il y avait un budget de traduction absolument énorme, il y avait un budget de fabrication absolument énorme, et la maison n'allait pas bien, donc j'ai décidé de faire un emprunt, j'ai emprunté 450 000 francs pour pouvoir faire ce livre... il coûtait pas 450 000 francs, mais bon... Et c'était quitte ou double: ou on le vendait, et je m'en sortais, ou je mettais la clé sous la porte. Et bien, ça a marché très fort." (Marianne Grange)

This trend reflects the evolution of the market:

"On est pris dans un processus de surproduction, et il est très difficile, effectivement, d'un point de vue d'éditeur, de pérenniser un fonds et de le faire tourner. Plus qu'avant, c'est dramatique, parce que les éditeurs publient de plus en plus. Il y a une fuite en avant vers la surproduction, alors qu'il faudrait beaucoup moins produire en sélectionnant, c'est un peu à la roulette russe." (Paul Matonti)

There are several dimensions in this process, such as the increase of the publication of Italian novels in Italy, the increasing openness of the French market and the increasing proportion of translations in the total number of literary books published in France. This interviewee claims that a careful selection of the works is necessary in order to reduce the side effects of overproduction. Another opinion is that the two dimensions – economic and symbolic – constitute the essence of publishing, and that the quest for economic success should not necessarily be denounced.

"De toutes façons, les éditeurs, leur boulot c'est de vendre des bouquins, aussi. Donc, s'ils trouvent... ce qui est idéal pour eux, c'est de trouver un auteur qui soit à la fois, je dirais, qui leur donne du prestige d'un point de vue intellectuel, littéraire, etc., et puis qui se vende bien. Ça c'est la quadrature du cercle. (...) Donc, on peut pas... il y aura toujours, à partir du moment où il y aura des maisons d'édition, il y aura toujours un phénomène commercial derrière... Il y aura toujours une recherche de la meilleure vente possible." (Henri Jouvenet)

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<sup>1</sup> "So, let's say, if I sell 600 copies of a book... For a French publisher, it is more of a problem to sell 600 copies of the book of an Italian author than of a French one, because... if he is Italian, there are translation costs. If I publish Poivre d'Arvor's novel, it costs me what I decide to give as an advance, as *à-va-loir*, and so on. If I translate a book by Andrea de Carlo, I will have to give him the advance and the rights, but I will also have to pay the translator. On top of it, in France, the translators are well paid – which is fair. So, between the two, I choose the one for whom I don't have to pay the costs for the translation. That is the whole difference."

In this extract, the underlying idea is that the economic dimension prevails over the symbolic one (the ideal being a combination of both). This raises the issue of the influence of economic constraints on the quality of the publications, which was evoked by many publishers.

"Bon, dans l'édition, il y a deux tendances dans les réactions. Vous avez soit la tendance éditeur, il faut qu'il fasse tourner sa boutique, faire les livres dont on parle. Si on en parle et qu'en plus ils sont bons, c'est encore mieux, mais enfin, je veux dire par là, pour caricaturer mais sans dire du faux... Il y a des gens qui vont à la foire de Francfort et on leur dit, dans notre pays tel livre est en tête des ventes, et ils disent oui, là je veux, on achète... On vend même des livres qui sont pas encore écrits. Donc, ça ça serait à l'extrême d'une tendance. Bon, c'est une tendance qui serait plutôt de regarder les nouveautés, qu'est-ce qui vient de Paraître dans tel pays et qui soit intéressant, qu'est-ce qui va avoir du succès, etc."  
(Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

"Ora, dato che gli editori pubblicano non per la gloria, ma per il bilancio, com'è giusto che sia, io credo che siamo alla punta della salita, e poi andremo giù."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

The second extract is quite laconic and cynical, however it gives a good summary of the evolution of the influence of the economic constraints on the search for symbolic prestige. It can also be phrased in terms of a literary and editorial reality:

"Je trouve pas... disons, la masse de livre qui paraît à l'occasion du salon ne correspond pas à une réalité de la vie littéraire... ça correspond à une réalité éditoriale, et je crois qu'actuellement les choses sont comme ça, et c'est ça qui devient dramatique, en parlant de l'Italie, je le dis partout. Ce qui se publie ne reflète plus la vie littéraire mais la vie éditoriale."  
(Jacques Laplace)

We can note that the discrepancy between literary and editorial lives presented by Jacques Laplace clearly reflects the transformations in the publishing world that we have highlighted in this chapter. This difference is at the heart of the shift between the symbolic and the commercial constraints.

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In this chapter, all of the steps in the publication process were presented and it was shown that each step could be approached and treated in different ways, according to the specific requirements, means, criteria, and so on. Taken as a whole, the publication process only constitutes one aspect of a publisher's daily activity, in the same way as, for instance, the drawing of plans for an architect is only one aspect of an architect's work. Publishers can be distinguished in this respect as they tend to present their work as an activity which requires a lot of creativity, especially in the identification of manuscripts. Luck and hazard were often present in the discussions with the interviewees, and they usually highlighted their own capacity – to dare, to

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<sup>1</sup> "Now, given that the publishers work not for glory but for the balance sheet result, as it should be, I think we are at the top of the up-trend, and after we will go down".

decipher or to invent. It appears as though the routine part of their work was non-existent. Strauss' definition of routine can be used in this context (Strauss, 1986): it is a repetitive action that requires a scheme that does not need be (re)invented every time someone carries out the action. He nuances the definition by saying that an action is never entirely routine, and that there are routine parts in any new action. In fact, *"la principale « fonction » des routines - c'est-à-dire en fait leur effet principal - est la contribution qu'elles apportent à l'efficacité ou au rendement d'une entreprise, sinon aux deux"* (Strauss, 1986: 355). Routine is thus valorised as part of the work, it is – among others things – a solution designed to resolve problematic situations. Strauss then distinguishes between innovative action (which is created to resolve a problem) and creative action (which requires a higher degree of innovation, that leads to major changes in perception, values and collective action). Creative actions pertain to the idea of "discovery", of the individual capacity to take risks and the ability to highlight and use unknown aspects of a task or a problem. In this way, Strauss emphasizes the importance of interaction between routine and creative actions, even if this interaction is complex. In fact, even creative actions use techniques, material and modes of thought that already exist, and can be part of routine actions. Therefore, creative actions can, at some point, become routine themselves. This helps to articulate the idea of "discovery", which is overvalued in the interviewees' presentation of their work, and that of routine which is implicit in the step by step description of the process of publication of books.

What comes out from our analysis is that some actions are presented as creative actions, even though they are in reality more like routines. This emphasis on the inventiveness of the work is a valorisation of symbolic side (i.e. the myth of the *éditeur-découvreur* in charge of a literary or intellectual mission), that stands in opposition to the weight of the economic constraints. We saw in this chapter that the publishers emphasize this side of their work in many respects, sometimes voluntarily minimising the constraints. This can partly be interpreted as a consequence of the perception of their profession as intellectual rather than commercial,<sup>1</sup> but it also testifies to the acknowledgement of a risk, a threat pertaining to the progressive penetration of the commercial logic in the editorial decisions: they seldom evoke it globally, but it interferes in the description of many of their tasks (selection of the books according to their topic, prevision of the success, negotiation of rights and so on). In the perspective of Strauss' definition of the types of action, we can thus view the creative actions as belonging to the symbolic sphere, whereas the routine actions, because they have to do with efficiency, are part of the commercial pole. This duality, however, makes sense only if we address the question of the structure of the field and its recent evolution.

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<sup>1</sup> Which corresponds to Bourdieu's distinction between "social and cultural workers" and "profit-oriented workers" (Bourdieu, 1979), that structures the opposition between social groups.

We have seen in this chapter and in the previous one that work within most publishing houses is increasingly segmented, insofar as it is based on delegation and specific cultural competences and as the economic organisation of the publishing houses has evolved in this sense. Moreover, the field itself is fragmented because it overlaps with different fields (such as publishing, Italian literature and financial groups). In this respect, the increasing fragmentation and the duality of functioning the publishing world need to be understood in relation to the very specific part of this world that we are looking at, that of the publication of Italian novels. This very detailed – and fragmented – presentation of the everyday work of the publishers was necessary in order to understand the specificities of the publication of Italian novels. In the publishers' representations of their own work, because I interviewed them in the context of a study on Italian literature, there is something that pertains to the representations of Italy. In other words, we could question if this (re)presentation of their work is specific to Italian literature. Would these publishers speak differently about other foreign literature, or French literature? Would the outcome of an analysis of their everyday work be different? In the next chapter, we will look at the representation of Italian literature and its diffusion in France from a more collective point of view, and endeavour to answer the following questions: is there a collective project in the publishing world as regards Italian literature? How is this "project" constructed and how is it specific to Italy?



## Chapter 6: Images of Italian literature

We want to understand the influence of representations of Italian literature on the choices of publication made by members within the field. In particular, we wish to explain how these constructions interfere with the symbolic part of their work, that is to say the part pertaining to the definition of literary value. The question in this chapter is to decipher the image of Italian literature within the field of publishing; especially, we aim to find out whether there is a constructed reflection about it. The underlying issue is that of the definition of Italianity: how do the publishers and specialists define the specificities of Italian literature? Can we speak of a (collective) project as regards its publication? More generally, do the publishers think in terms of national literatures? In our case, does this pertain to the representations of Italy that we have highlighted in chapter two?

We will thus look at the construction of the representations of Italian literature as a process which is linked to that of the publication of Italian novels in France. To this end, we will analyse the way members of the field interpret the evolution of these publications, and how this interferes with the collective representations of Italy and Italian literature. In the second section of this chapter, we will focus on the interviewees' definition of the public's expectations, to the extent that it helps us to understand certain issues at stake in their representations of Italian literature, especially as regards the success of books.

### 1. REPRESENTATIONS OF ITALIAN LITERATURE WITHIN THE FIELD OF SPECIALISTS

The first question is concerned with whether the interviewees speak in terms of "Italian literature" in a general sense and what is covered by this expression. We can wonder what the notion of national literature refers to. In the French case, the reference to foreign literatures participated in the discovery of national literature: *"Quand on aborde les étapes historiques de constitution d'une littérature nationale, on ne peut manquer d'observer la présence obligatoire de références à l'étranger"* (Werner & Espagne, 1994: 8). Because France and Italy have had strong cultural ties (as we saw in Chapter two), we can assume that the reference to Italian literature plays a role in the definition of French literature.

In the interviewees' discourse, Italian literature was usually not referred to in relation to French literature. For some of them, literature is simply an ensemble of authors and the idea of trends are *a posteriori* constructions that do not necessarily fit with reality.

"Je crois qu'il y a des auteurs... Bon, je sais même pas si ça a pas toujours été le cas... Qui, au bout d'un certain temps, constituent ensuite la littérature italienne ou la littérature française... Donc il faut toujours le propulser, le jeter dans un cadre historique qu'on ne peut évaluer qu'après-coup, pas avant-coup. Je pense qu'il y a des auteurs italiens, oui, ça oui... Je sais pas s'il y a une littérature italienne qui serait très différenciée aujourd'hui d'autres littératures. Mais il y a aussi une crise de la littérature en tant que concept, en tant qu'entité conceptuelle, en tant qu'entité philosophique, en tant que... thème littéraire même. Donc, il y a des auteurs, certainement." (Claude Muccino)

"Il me semble que les italiens, ils aiment bien, ils ont un espèce de sens de la promotion. Alors, ils aiment beaucoup... En France, on raisonne pas du tout comme ça, par exemple eux ils raisonnent toujours en termes générationnels. Et c'est pas faux d'ailleurs, il n'y a pas que du faux. C'est le cas pour les poètes. On prend un peu par génération par tranches de 10 ou 15 ans, parce que ça a correspondu aussi, avec le fascisme et tout ça, à des périodes historiques qui faisaient peut-être sens. Nous on raisonne pas comme ça, pas par génération, parfois par mouvement, mais ça fait belle lurette que c'est plus opérationnel, on a peut-être des tendances, mais bon... mais ce qui se dégage surtout, moi je crois, c'est d'abord des singularités. Parce que malgré tout quand vous lisez une œuvre, soit un livre d'un auteur, soit plusieurs livres du même auteur, la première chose c'est que vous avez affaire à cette œuvre-là. Bon, ensuite, que vous vous disiez, bon, cet auteur là, celui-ci, il y a peut-être des points communs, quelque chose qui peut faire sens, je dirais, d'un point de vue historique, sociologique, pourquoi pas. Ça c'est tout à fait possible; mais quand on lit des livres, on ne lit pas des courants, on lit des livres, d'abord. Donc, on nous a parlé des cannibales, ça s'est déjà évanoui... j'ai pas vraiment l'impression qu'on puisse vraiment parler de courant. Cela dit, sur ce qui est immédiatement contemporain, moi je n'ai pas une vision suffisante pour en parler." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

The idea of generations illustrates the panorama of contemporary literature as presented in chapter four, especially the notions of 'old guard', 'intermediate guard' and of 'relieving troop'. This way of presenting the recent trends in Italian literature does not exclude the singularities, the authors which altogether constitute what the interviewees refer to as "Italian literature". Overall, the most common view is that it does not make sense to speak about one Italian literature, as it is composed of multiple stands and not necessarily characterised by its "italianity". We shall analyse the way that the interviewees evaluate this literature and how they circumscribe it, focusing on the notion of talents. We shall subsequently highlight the variety and diversity of this literature. However, firstly, it is necessary to consider the historical context and examine how the interviewees have perceived the evolution of the diffusion of Italian literature in France since the beginning of the 1980s.



### 1.1. Success: a cyclical process

#### *The beginning of the 1980s: boom, wave or explosion?*

In the 1980s, as we saw above, there was a progressive increase in the number of publications of Italian novels in France. In this regard, we need to look at the role of the specialised media, especially as in 1980 three publications paved the way for a change. These included an issue of the journal *Change* in January, entitled "*L'Italie change*"; a special issue on Italy of the *Magazine littéraire*, edited by Philippe Di Meo, in March; and finally, the October issue of the same *Magazine* contained a dossier on Italian literature from the 1960s to the 1980s. These three publications awakened an interest for a literature which had previously been considered as minor. The second factor to take into account is the publication of Umberto Eco's *Name of the rose* in 1982 – which had been released in Italy the previous year. It received the *Médicis étranger* prize and was voted "book of the year" by the magazine *Lire*. By 1988, 800 000 copies of the book had been sold in France, and 8 millions worldwide (Colin, 1996). This book was one of the first Italian international best-sellers.<sup>1</sup> It was diffused through a circuit which was broader and more commercial than the usual circuit of diffusion of Italian literature in France, and it constituted a turning-point in the representation of Italian literature in France.

The series of publications continued, with the *Nouvel Observateur's* issue on "*L'heure italienne*" in December 1986, and a third issue of the *Magazine Littéraire* called "*L'Italie d'aujourd'hui*", which gave an update for the years 1980-1986. As we mentioned in chapter four, many authors who were already famous in Italy, but unknown in France, were translated into French in the last 1980s, such as Beppe Fenoglio, Anna Maria Ortese, Aldo Palazzeschi and Elisabetta Rasy. They thus join the panel of the writers who had received critical acclaim in the beginning of the 1980s, such as Daniele Del Giudice, Andrea De Carlo, Aldo Busi, Antonio Tabucchi and Pier Vittorio Tondelli – all of these authors were portrayed in the January 1987 *Magazine Littéraire*. Some of them had been very successful, such as Antonio Tabucchi for *Le fil de l'horizon* and *Le jeu de l'envers*, or Vincenzo Consolo for *Le Retable* and *Lunaria*.<sup>2</sup> In 1989, the release of Eco's *Pendule de Foucault* received a lot of media attention and was publicized much in advance. The journalists expected a success in proportion to that of the *Name of the rose* (Colin, 1996: 119). Since the 1970s, no author had been followed with the same level of interest from the French critics.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, there are 36 foreign versions of *I promessi sposi*, by Manzoni, first published in 1840, and 62 of *Il gattopardo*, by Tomasi di Lampedusa, published in 1957.

<sup>2</sup> These two authors are praised, respectively, by *L'Express* of the 26th August- 1st September 1988 and the *Magazine littéraire* n°25 in June 1988.

Ces deux auteurs sont respectivement encensés par *L'Express* du 26 août-1er septembre 1988 et *Le Magazine Littéraire* n°255, June 1988.

We will deal more in details with the impact Eco's books on the diffusion of Italian literature in France in the next chapter. Here, we will look at his success as one part (or a cause, or factor) of a broader phenomenon, which will be called the Italian wave of the 1980s. This overview of the publications on Italy in the specialised literary media shows that there was a cascade effect; and therefore, we need to understand how this influenced the decisions to publish Italian novels. In a way, we can phrase it as the "egg-and-chicken problem": did the media reflect an evolution in the editorial world, or did the publishers believe the media had started an Italian trend (and thus started publishing Italian books)? We will look at the way the interviewees refer to the Italian wave of the 1980s. However, it is relevant to recall that part of the interviewees are Italian specialists, whilst others are not. In other words, some of them have a sensibility towards Italian literature (for instance, the head of Italian collections, the publishers who are also translators, and so on.), and others only find out information about Italian literature through generalist means. As regards the egg-and-chicken problem, this means that the two phenomena are necessarily mingled. The publication of Italian novels is necessarily based, at least to a certain extent, on the interaction between specialists and non-specialists of Italian literature. It will thus be interesting to look at the way different interpretations of this question can be found in the interviews.

"Mon idée c'est que d'une part, à partir de 1950, et jusque 1970-1975, à peu près, le rythme auquel on traduisait des auteurs italiens était relativement peu important. Il y avait un certain nombre d'auteurs, en général presque toujours les mêmes, qui étaient presque automatiquement traduits. Le meilleur exemple c'est Moravia: Moravia publiait un bouquin, il était automatiquement traduit un an et demi après. Bon, il y avait comme ça un certain nombre d'écrivains très connus, et puis c'était les arbres qui cachaient la forêt, il me semble qu'on avait assez peu de connaissances de l'ensemble de la production italienne. Ça a duré comme ça, oui, disons jusque dans les années 1970. Dans les années 1970 ça a commencé à bouger un peu, et il y a eu un changement radical dans les années 1980, avec une espèce de mode pour la littérature italienne, ça je pense que tout le monde vous le confirmera, qui a culminé en gros en 1985, avec la Foire de Francfort qui avait invité l'Italie comme invité d'honneur. A ce moment-là tout le monde a voulu en faire, tout le monde a traduit des textes, euh... je pense que le succès international du Nom de la Rose de Eco, en 1981 pour l'Italie, 1982 pour la traduction française, n'y est certainement pas étranger. Ça a certainement contribué à attirer l'attention, et puis à donner une espèce de curiosité aux éditeurs, aux traducteurs potentiels, c'est un peu comme ça. Depuis, évidemment, depuis cet espèce de pic qui correspond à 1985, les choses sont retombées, évidemment. On en a fait trop, on a fait un peu de tout, y compris du mauvais, enfin, des choses d'intérêt secondaire... avec un effet de saturation et de lassitude de la part, je dirais, à la fois des usagers, du public, des libraires, éventuellement de la presse. Et puis, peu à peu, les choses ont repris un rythme, relativement satisfaisant, mais de toutes façons supérieur à ce que c'était avant 1980." (Marco Guglielmi)

This summary of the overall situation during the 1980s by a specialist of Italian literature contains many dimensions: how it started, how the trend was created, how it could be explained and what happened afterwards. It conveys the idea of a "radical change" which is no longer present after the mid-1980s (there is a *retombée*, a fallback). In addition, we understand that there was indeed an increase of publications in the 1980s, which continues to exist, however it is somehow

independent from the boom of the first half of the 1980s. This confirms our idea that the boom was constructed by the actors of the field as well as it was a real literary trend. However, in the interviews we often find this idea of radical change or "fracture". For instance, Sandra Di Maggio talks about a "*véritable fracture*", Delphine Vasseur of a "*rupture profonde*" and Jean-Charles Zilio of an "*explosion*".

"Donc, c'est pour ça que... alors, sur cette vague des années 1980, il y a eu tout, comme si une digue s'était ouverte. Il y avait un retard énorme, c'était une forêt vierge, la littérature italienne contemporaine, à part Bassani, Carlo Anna Moresco et Moravia, tout le reste, on savait pas qu'ils existaient." (Jean-Charles Zilio)

"L'impressione è un po' questa: a partire dagli anni 1980 a seguire, l'editoria francese, e quindi di conseguenza i vari mezzi di informazione etc., si sono aperti, o riaperti, se lei vuole, alla letteratura italiana moderna e contemporanea, con un interesse davvero nuovo."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

The idea of a dam breaking illustrates the violence of the boom of the 1980s, at least in the way it was perceived and interpreted by its protagonists. On the whole, this boom, or wave, is often presented as a fashionable trend (*mode*).

"Quand on a créé la collection, tout de suite après, c'était dans les années 1980, il y a eu un phénomène de mode qui a fait qu'il y a eu un engouement pour la littérature italienne, et il y a beaucoup de maisons d'édition qui se sont lancées là-dedans, qui ont acheté des livres chers, nous on pouvait pas suivre." (Claudine Plessier)

"Quello che invece è successo sul fronte francese è che a partire dagli anni Ottanta, c'è stato un'improvvisa apertura. Anche un po', diciamo, una moda, una leggera moda. Per cui gli italiani sono stati improvvisamente... « guarda che non hanno dei brutti libri, alla fine »."<sup>2</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

The interviewees offered various explanations of this wave in the 1980s. The most common explanation is the success of the *Name of the Rose*, which had the effect of encouraging many young Italian authors. However, its impact is – apparently – also strongly questioned:

"Le début des années 1990... C'était ce qu'on appelle l'onde portée, l'onde de choc du succès du Nom de la Rose, je crois pas du tout que c'était le Nom de la Rose qui ait réveillé l'intérêt pour la littérature italienne, je pense que c'est autre chose, plus complexe, je pense qu'il y a pas une cause unique. Je dirais, le succès c'est comme le suicide, il y a jamais une seule raison!" (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

The interviewees often admitted that they did not believe that the *Name of the rose* had been fundamental in the explosion of Italian literature in France (even though its huge success is undeniable); however, it was almost always mentioned by them. For instance, a few interviewees attributed the boom to the transformations of the structure of the French publishing world.

<sup>1</sup> "Here is my feeling: from the 1980s onwards, the French publishing world, and consequently the various means of information, and so on, have opened up, or reopened up, if you want, to modern and contemporary Italian literature, with a real new interest".

<sup>2</sup> "Conversely, what happened on the French side is that from the 1980s onwards, there has been an increasing openness. And also, we can say so, a fashion, a slight fashion. And the Italians have been suddenly... 'look, they have books that are not so bad, after all'..."

"Il y a ce phénomène français, peut-être européen, je sais pas, en tout cas français de la fin des années 1970, ou du milieu des années 1980, de l'existence de tout un tas de petites maisons d'édition qui ensuite ont été plus ou moins reprises par de grands éditeurs... et chaque petite maison d'édition, encore une fois, à partir du phénomène du Nom de la rose, ou de ce qui était autour, je dis le Nom de la rose parce que c'est un phénomène colossal, mais enfin, il y avait d'autres auteurs, aussi, qui ont quand même bien fonctionné. Donc ces petits éditeurs ont cherché la... ont cherché un autre Umberto Eco, leur... ont cherché en Italie leur mine d'or éventuelle, ne l'ont pas trouvée, la plupart du temps, mais en tout cas l'ont cherchée, et puis... Donc, si se sont créées une trentaine de petites maisons d'édition, chaque petite maison a eu envie d'aller vers l'Italie pour essayer de créer quelque chose." (Henri Jouvenet)

From this perspective, the "Eco effect" was influenced by the creation of many small publishing houses who tried to break into the book market. The success of the *Name of the Rose* represented a kind of model. However, the changes within the already existing publishing houses could also have an impact. In fact, some significant changes had taken place the publishing world in the 1980s – especially the growing importance of investments by financial groups –, that influenced the overall functioning of the market.

"Ce qui a joué, c'est pas seulement le Nom de la Rose, à mon avis, ce sont les efforts militants d'un certain nombre de personnes, mais c'est aussi les changements Paradoxaux qui sont intervenus au sein des maisons d'édition... c'est que cette surproduction, cette prise du pouvoir par les financiers, supposait une vocation tout à fait extraordinaire, on a élargi le champ. Pas seulement pour le domaine italien, mais également pour le domaine italien. Eco a certainement eu un rôle mais..." (Paul Matonti)

The progressive hold of the financial groups on the book market in the 1980s is well described by Reynaud (1999). She describes the invention of a new sector of 'publication-communication' in which the book is viewed as any other commercial good. In fact, the imposition of the economic logic on the publishing houses undoubtedly led to a quest for a best-seller and Eco was the perfect example of this.

However, the success of Italian literature in the 1980s is often presented as a direct consequence of some transformations in the literature itself.

"Parce que, bon, il y a eu une période assez stérile, où les textes étaient complètement hermétiques, où tout le monde doutait du roman. Je veux dire, en Italie. Et il n'y a pas eu la même stimulation qu'il y a eu en France autour du nouveau roman. Je pense que ça a été, même, terroriste, d'une certaine manière. Et puis brusquement ont surgi des écrivains... Tabucchi, on n'a pas prononcé son nom, voilà quelqu'un qui a du succès! Brusquement ont surgi des écrivains qui ont fait une réflexion sur le roman et ont donné une forme très originale, au début des années 1980. Moi je dis toujours que j'ai lu la même année un livre de Tabucchi, qui était *Notturmo Indiano*, le premier livre de Del Giudice, *Le stade de Wimbledon*, j'ai lu Elisabetta Rasi, *La première extase*, j'ai lu Andrea Di Carlo, son premier livre, *Treno di panna*, est un livre très original. Vous voyez, ces livres étaient des romans très particuliers, tous. Ils étaient tournés vers l'étranger, tous se passaient dans un autre pays que l'Italie. Ils étaient narratifs mais en même temps réflexifs, méditatifs. Il y avait quelque chose qui était un renouveau de la narration italienne, et ça a beaucoup dynamisé... et bon, les quatre que je vous cite sont très littéraires. Andrea di Carlo est devenu un romancier populaire après mais au départ il était... un écrivain, oui, très littéraire. Donc, il y a eu un renouveau venu de là, et après ça a évolué différemment. C'est-à-dire qu'on surgi tous ces

écrivains de langue parlée, qui sont intéressants, évidemment. Ils sont intéressants dans leur pays, au fond ils donnent la parole à des gens qui ne l'avaient pas, en littérature, jusque là. "  
(Paul Darlignac)

It is interesting that the interviewee mentions many authors apart from Umberto Eco, as if he wishes to overlook Eco's impact on the market. This strengthens the idea that from the 1980s onwards there were an increasing discrepancy between commercial constraints (especially the quest of best-sellers) and literary judgement (provided with symbolic value). The decision to omit Eco is deliberate and this is precisely because he touches a very wide audience.

We thus observe that there is no unified explanation for the boom. The interpretations differ according to the level of analysis (global or individual) and to the position in the field (related to the importance of the economic constraints).

### *A storm in a teacup?*

Most interviewees agreed that there was a significant change in the 1980s, regardless of whether it can be called a boom, wave or an explosion. By definition, a boom is a short term phenomenon (and so is a wave), which means that it must go down afterwards. In the first place, the publications were not always followed by strong sales, and this created some economic problems for the publishers.

"Et alors, si je vous donne le portrait des années 1980 et de ce qui a précédé, enfin de compte, les livres italiens, y compris ceux de Sciascia qui étaient vendus en Italie à 350 000 exemplaires, comme la Trilogie, *Il Contesto* et *Candido in Sicilia*, ne trouvaient en France... même si Sciascia avaient deux pages dans le Nouvel Obs, une page entière dans le Monde, avec des caricatures de Viaso ou d'autres. Enfin, des espaces ou des articles très beaux, bon, il dépassait pas les 1500 ou 2000 exemplaires. De 300 000 en Italie à 1500 ici. Et tout le reste c'était pareil." (Jean-Charles Zilio)

The commercial success of the Italian novels of the 1980s – apart from Umberto Eco – was not proportional in any way to their sales in Italy.

"Et puis comme toujours dans ce milieu, enfin, sauf qu'on voulait pas, parce que on voyait bien qu'on perdait de l'argent avec la collection... bien que de qualité, ce qui ne va pas de pair avec les ventes, en général... donc on suivait pas. Et puis très vite, quand ils ont vu que ça se vendait pas, ils ont arrêté, voilà, parce que ça marche comme ça, c'est comme ça, l'édition. Donc, cette folie s'est arrêté..." (Claudine Plessier)

"Alors, elle raconte l'anecdote que je trouve assez amusante, et en même temps un peu désolante... c'est du fait que le succès d'Umberto Eco a fait vendre beaucoup d'italiens, beaucoup... dans un insuccès total. Les gens voulaient lire Umberto Eco, les italiens ils n'en avaient rien à faire." (Marianne Grange)

What appears from these abstracts is that there was a kind of "Eco effect". In other words, the success of the *Name of the rose* led to the publication of many Italian novels, because the publishers sought the best-seller that would save them from potential bankruptcy, but then when they

realised the Italians were not selling they stopped buying Italian novels (even though they published more of them than before the 1980s anyway).

"La littérature italienne a connu un pic... a été très à la mode dans les années 1980, au moment où j'ai créé la maison d'édition, les éditeurs se sont jetés sur les auteurs italiens, ils ont eu beaucoup de déconvenue, les auteurs ne se sont pas vendus, certains d'entre eux ont été abandonnés, et par ailleurs... ils ont eu du mal à remonter cette pente." (Anna Moresco)

The consequences of these publications were significant for some publishers, especially the smaller and newer ones. This raises the issue mentioned in the beginning of this section of the egg-and-chicken phenomenon. There are two spheres involved: the publishing world (i.e. the actors of the publications) on the one hand, and the specialised world on the other. The latter includes all of the intellectuals (academics, translators, critics and middle-men of any kind) who have an expertise pertaining to Italian literature and gave an impetus to some trends. Of course, many specialists also participate directly in the publications, same as many heads of collection are (or become) experts in Italian literature. This demonstrates the overlap between the two worlds. More precisely, we wish to understand how the contamination between these two spheres occurred, and what it tells us about the functioning of the intellectual world.

"Bon, bien sûr, vous avez eu un relais après Eco. C'est-à-dire que toute la presse... Il y a eu des numéros spéciaux, il y a eu le Magazine Littéraire, deux pages régulièrement dans le Monde. Si vous prenez les années 1980, toutes les années 1980, un mois sur deux le Monde fait une page ou deux sur les littératures italiennes, tous les journaux suivent. Il y a vraiment une explosion de la littérature italienne, parce qu'il y avait une rétention."  
(Jean-Charles Zilio)

This interviewee highlights the intermingled nature of the critique. For example, *Le Monde* is a point of reference as regards literary critiques and the Thursday supplement *Monde des livres* is perceived as a barometer of the latest trends in France. In the case of Italian literature, the frequency of the articles have contributed to the explosion of the special issues and dossiers, and thus – as described above –, at least to a certain extent, to that of the publications. However, the link between these two phenomena is not easy to decipher.

"Donc, pourquoi, parce qu'on a dit, s'il y a un Eco, il doit y avoir autre chose. Eco a fait écho, c'est le cas de le dire. Et effectivement, on a eu un développement assez faramineux, et là, on s'est mis à traduire un peu n'importe quoi. C'est-à-dire que, cherchant un Eco, cherchant de l'or, on s'est mis à traduire aussi du mâchefer, du gravas, etc. Parce que... Pourquoi il y a eu cette inadéquation entre le désir de faire passer et le passage, c'est qu'il y avait méconnaissance. C'est-à-dire qu'il y avait les universitaires qui étaient au courant de la moindre virgule dans la Divine Comédie, et puis il y avait le reste, qui ne savait rien du tout."  
(Jean-Charles Zilio)

The idea of an echo reinforces the notion of a closed world where there is a constant interaction and intermingling between the actors or the two spheres. the two spheres (specialists and actors) Some of the exponents of network analysis have recommended to approach these networks through the prism of relationships, namely the types of exchange between two actors and the

ensemble of the relations constituting the networks. From our perspective, this is interesting as it requires that the sphere of relations is – at least partially – closed.<sup>1</sup>

*"Comment il a démarré, ce mouvement?"*

Je crois que ça a démarré comme ça, dans les années 1980, sur une série de gens qui se sont rendus compte que l'italianisme... que c'était une des fonctions de l'italianisme universitaire, qui avait été laissée de côté parce que d'autres choix avaient été faits, mais que du coup ça irriguait nullement le champ intellectuel français, ça... je veux dire, dans le meilleur des cas les italianistes français étaient reconnus comme des spécialistes de littérature en Italie, mais que du coup la littérature italienne avait pas, ou très peu, d'impact sur les gens qui par ailleurs s'intéressaient à la littérature en général, ou à la philosophie en général, ou à l'historiographie en général."

(Jean-Pierre Romano)

This interviewee shows that the specialist sphere was isolated in the French intellectual field until the 1980s. Furthermore, he indicates that the boom is related to an opening of this sphere, that was not come initiated by the members of the sphere themselves, but by outsiders (especially members of the publishing world) who acknowledged the need for communication between the two spheres. Consequently, there was a process of contamination of the intellectual field by the specialists, that led to the explosion of the publication of Italian novels in France.

We have shown how this boom was described and analysed within the field of publications of Italian literature in France. This seems to have been followed by a calmer period, in which the number of publications declined and the critics were less enthusiastic. We shall now look at what happened between the end of the 1980s and the present day and determine the long time effects of this wave.

### *Or just a lull?*

The interviewees often referred to the current period as that of a renewal or revival of interest in Italian literature.

*"Mon impression, c'est qu'il y a quand même beaucoup de traductions de jeunes auteurs italiens aujourd'hui... c'est un phénomène assez nouveau, ça ?*

Oui, c'est nouveau, c'est tautologique, il y a une nouvelle littérature italienne. Mais bon, l'intérêt pour ce qui se passe en Italie n'est pas récent. On ne découvre pas tout à coup la littérature italienne." (Charles Chevallier)

*"Et est-ce que vous diriez qu'il y a aussi un regain d'intérêt qui est plus récent, vers 1995-1996?"*

Je pense que ça se confirme... Oui, je pense qu'il y a eu un regain d'intérêt. Alors, pour quelle raison, j'en sais trop rien. Là... sinon peut-être que la curiosité du public s'élargit, que les collections de textes sont plus nombreuses. Il y a, si vous voulez, un effet positif, je crois, dû à certaines collections éditoriales."

(Marco Guglielmi)

<sup>1</sup> This corresponds to a theorisation of the influence of the structure of the network on the relations themselves: Ferrand defines the structure of a network as "un ensemble de principes de co-dépendance entre les relations, c'est-à-dire la manière dont un acteur tient compte de l'organisation d'un petit nombre de liens existants lorsqu'il établit un nouveau lien". (Ferrand, 1997).

"En tout cas pour l'italien... je pense que l'édition est soumise au phénomène de mode... comme tous les secteurs, et qu'il y a peut-être une mode italienne, en ce moment.

*Et vous avez une idée du pourquoi il y aurait une mode italienne en ce moment?*

Bah... je vous dis, je pense que... moi j'ai pas d'hypothèse particulière, sauf sans doute que comme on a fait connaître un certain nombre d'auteurs noirs italiens qui sont vraiment intéressants, sans doute ça a fait aussi boule de neige par rapport au reste du secteur. Il y a eu un effet d'entraînement. Maintenant, il y a sûrement d'autres raisons!"

(Sylvain Renucci)

These three interviewees agree on the existence of a recent renewal, which started during the mid-1990s. However, it remains difficult to reflect on a very recent period, which explains why the interpretations of this phenomenon are less clear than those of the 1980s<sup>1</sup>. For instance, Thierry Durel mentions the sympathy of the French for the Italians as a possible explanation for the renewal. Other interviewees focus on the impact of the Cannibals movement:<sup>1</sup>

"Vous savez, je crois qu'il y a eu un nouveau faux départ, qui a été les cannibales. On s'est mis à traduire absolument tout le monde, tout garçon et fille de 25 ans qui publiait un livre en Italie était immédiatement traduit en français, et ça marchait pas bien... Ce n'était pas du tout soutenu par la même agitation médiatique qu'en France, donc ça ne pouvait pas fonctionner de la même manière. C'était différent. Je sais pas, c'est comme si la fille de Mitterrand est traduite à l'étranger, bon, ça fera pas le même effet qu'en France, c'est différent, c'est exactement le même système. Donc là je pense que c'était un malentendu, et c'était un peu idiot de se... de vouloir suivre au jour le jour les événements médiatiques italiens." (Paul Darlignac)

"Finalement, ce mouvement, c'est début années 90, et bien ça a été une façon de dire enfin, on va un peu faire le point sur ce qui se passe de neuf en Italie. Et ça a été une étiquette facile à prendre à pleines mains. Il n'y a qu'à voir Libération, ils avaient fait deux pages sur la littérature cannibale..." (Danièle Perrineau)

This movement thus acted as a focal point that put Italian literature on display, at least for a short period. However, this momentum continued as in the 1980s, and more Italian novels were translated and published.

"Oui, il y a beaucoup de choses. Mais quand vous lisez ce qui sort... Bon, moi je lis quand même beaucoup, mais... on est étonnés! il y a des livres, vraiment. Il y a eu une époque, il y avait la mode des jeunes. Il suffisait d'avoir quinze ou seize ans et d'écrire un truc, pof, on était publié! Et il y a des auteurs qui ont beaucoup pâti de ça. Par exemple, Silvia Ballestra, qui est quand même très douée, elle a pâti de cette explosion des jeunes, par exemple Rizzi... on les a montés en mayonnaise, et les auteurs qui vraiment avaient du talent ont été englobés dans cette vague, qu'après on a complètement rejetée! Après, il y avait le mouvement des

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<sup>1</sup> *Gioventù cannibale* was a series of short stories by a plethora of young Italian authors (many of whom had never published anything before) released in 1996 by Einaudi. The subtitle of the book, "La prima antologia dell'orrore estremo", indicates the genre. This book had a great impact in Italy because it was the first wave of *trash* literature (following Brett Easton Ellis, among others). It was translated into French and published in 2000. Marco Guglielmi's defines the phenomenon as follows: "Parlons d'un phénomène qui a pas mal fait parler en Italie entre 1995 et 1998, je me rappelle pas des dates exactes, c'est ce qu'on a appelé les Cannibales, sur la lancée d'une célèbre anthologie publiée chez Einaudi qui s'appelait "Gioventù Cannibale". C'était des textes de très jeunes écrivains, très violents, très brutaux, très sanglants, plein de drogues, de violence, etc. Très inspiré par la télévision, par les bandes dessinées japonaises, par la littérature trash... Ça avait fait un malheur en Italie... je veux dire un malheur éditorial [*he laughs*], c'est-à-dire qu'ils avaient vendu 50, 100 000, quelques fois plus. Donc on en a beaucoup parlé, donc les éditeurs français se sont dit, il y a peut-être quelque chose à faire." (Marco Guglielmi)



cannibales, soi-disant les cannibales... c'est encore une trouvaille des éditeurs, ça, c'est un truc de marketing, ça n'a jamais existé!" (Laure Fougère)

Similar to the previous wave of Italian literature, the specialists insisted on the fact that the success of one book (or at least the curiosity around one book, as far as the cannibals are concerned) led to an increase in the publications, but that this was somewhat artificial as it was found to be disappointing in terms of quality. It seemed as if the filter of selection of the Italian novels that are translated into French had been expanded, at least temporarily.

### *The ups and downs of Italian literature in France: a recurrent phenomenon?*

The notion of fashion, which was frequently used to qualify the infatuation of the 1980s, also applies to more recent periods:

"Alors, il y a eu une mode après Umberto Eco, une première vague... et puis, après, on passe à une autre littérature... là, avec le salon du livre. (...)

*Elles viennent d'où, ces modes, à votre avis?*

A mon avis, c'est un livre qui en tire d'autres. Par exemple, Umberto Eco, ça avait été ça, ça a tiré plein de... de littérature italienne à l'époque."

(Laure Fougère)

"Je crois que c'est par cycles. Je crois que c'est le temps qu'émerge, une petite dizaine d'années, 8-10, le temps qu'émergent ces nouveaux auteurs. Oui, il y a eu Consolo, Tabucchi, qui on pourrait mettre... peut-être Rosetta Loy... mais bon, c'est difficile de faire des... une fois qu'on a ce groupe qui a fait surface, ensuite, avant qu'on puisse percevoir qu'il y a des nouveaux noms, des jeunes écrivains qui font des choses intéressantes... ça c'est la génération de Foix, de Lucarelli... bon, le phénomène Camilleri c'est un peu autre chose... qui il y a d'autre ? De Luca, évidemment... bon, il faut un temps, quoi, il faut un délai." (Danièle Perrineau)

The succession of periods of growth and decline are cyclical. There are recurrent trends in the rise and fall in the interest in Italian literature, which are followed by rise and fall in the number of publications.

"Ora, io ho l'impressione che questo fenomeno non sia destinato a durare. Ho l'impressione che, salvo qualche nome, come giusto che sia, si vada verso un processo di selezione naturale. Di qui a qualche anno, certamente il livello quantitativo di queste traduzioni... numero, in parole povere, è destinato a scendere. Per un motivo fondamentale, inevitabile, che è la legge fondamentale, poi, dell'editoria."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

"Mais au fond, la découverte de la littérature italienne, c'est vraiment récent. On découvre une littérature, bonne ou mauvaise, mais actuelle, et italienne. Ça c'est l'aspect positif de la chose. Bon, il faut faire le tri, évidemment. C'est ça que je crains, c'est que cette pléthore, une exagération, on traduit tout et n'importe quoi, ça va être nuisible... après on va se calmer, on va revenir à des choses plus raisonnables." (Jacques Laplace)

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<sup>1</sup> "Now, I have the feeling that this phenomenon is not likely to last. I have the feeling that, except for a few names, as it should be, we are going towards a process of natural selection. In the next few years, certainly the quantitative level of these translations... their number, to put it simply, is bound to go down. For a fundamental, unavoidable, reason, which is in fact the fundamental law of the publishing world..."

This process is always perceived the same way, and the metaphor of the filter illustrates this very well. The publications increased when the level of vigilance was at its lowest, that is to say as the filter becomes broader and the quality of the books published goes down (according to the interviewees).

*"Justement, vous me parlez de Eco. Est-ce que vous diriez que la traduction du Nom de la Rose, disons, ou de son œuvre du début des années 1980, a eu une influence sur le marché littéraire français face à la littérature italienne ?*

Mais, ce n'est pas un cas isolé ! Euh... vous ne l'avez peut-être pas remarqué, mais tous les dix quinze ans il y a un fait... un effet, plus encore qu'un fait, bon, on peut citer le Guépard, par exemple, ça a été un gros moment de l'édition italienne. Mais c'était pas l'édition italienne, c'était un fait spécifique, c'est un auteur qui va être... Donc, périodiquement, ça se passe, ça a lieu. Je ne crois pas que Eco a changé quoi que ce soit dans l'édition, c'est qu'effectivement à un moment donné le Nom de la Rose a eu ce succès qui a dépassé d'ailleurs les mentalités, les usages, les coutumes, les mœurs... mais ce n'était pas isolé, il y avait eu le Guépard, peut-être que la Storia, d'Elsa Morante, a fait la même chose... donc il y a des situations où effectivement un livre explose, mais il ne modifie en rien la situation par rapport à l'Italie, ça ne conduit pas à connaître davantage l'Italie..."

(Claude Muccino)

Claude Muccino argues that these cycles started even earlier than the end of the 1950s, and asserts that there are similar cases in the history of Italian literature in France. According to this interviewee, these cases do not influence the overall representations of this literature in France. This would mean that the cycles are mainly economic and are related to the book market, rather than to the representations and the interest for Italy in France. We will now look more in details at the representations of Italian literature among the specialists, and particularly at how they define "good" literature, for instance.

## 1.2. Is Italian literature perceived as "good"?

As insiders in the field, the interviewees tend to justify their choices of publishing (or not) an Italian novel on the basis of literary quality, as we saw in the previous chapter. When they express their opinion about the quality of a book, it also contains more general considerations about Italian literature in general, and some features will now be highlighted.

### *The level of translations*

It should firstly be mentioned that many interviewees asserted that the level of translations posed a problem for a long time, and this often discredited Italian literature itself. As we saw in chapter four, this mainly prevailed until the 1980s; this is one of the reasons why so many classics were re-translated and published from the end of the 1980s onwards.

In the interviewees' discourse, the issue of competence is also frequently mentioned. This notion involves several dimensions, such as the knowledge of the original language, the distance from the text and the exactness of vocabulary. The problem pertains to the fact that Italian and French both originate from Latin, and they seem thus quite similar. Most of the vocabulary comes from Latin and can be understood even without having learnt the other language. However, this concerns only a small part of the languages, to the extent that the grammar is different, and also the construction of the sentences. This is interesting from our perspective as it is another expression of the ambiguity between proximity and distance that characterises the reciprocal representations of the two countries. Moreover, the French intellectuals have theorised the issue of translation since the sixteenth century. The debate has been about the source and target language, namely whether to focus on the cultural distance between the contexts of the texts.

"Je pense qu'on peut dire qu'en France, jusqu'au second 20ème siècle, on a traduit comme ça. Il y a qu'à regarder la Pléiade... pas seulement de l'italien... le génie de la langue française ramène l'écriture à ses propres critères. Je sais pas si ça a une quelconque réalité, mais il y a eu un article de Kundera sur la traduction dans le Débat, un des tous premiers numéros, au début des années 1980. C'était un truc assez rigolo... il parlait de quelqu'un qui l'avait traduit à partir de l'anglais, et qui parlait pas un mot de sa propre langue. Donc, il demande à ce type, mais comment vous avez traduit mon bouquin, et en fait il l'avait traduit à partir de la traduction anglaise! Et alors, il faisait tout un truc sur... il faut qu'on sente l'éloignement dans la traduction, faut qu'on sente que c'est une traduction. Je crois que malgré tout... bon, alors, ça a pris des formes théorisées, sourcier, cibliste, machin... au fond, c'est le même débat qu'il y a eu au 16ème siècle, les ciblistes l'ont emporté pour la première fois et pour pas mal de siècles... mais là il y a vraiment une présence massive dans les 30 dernières années de traduction de gens qui pensent qu'en effet il faut faire sentir la distance temporelle et la distance géographique dans la traduction. Et... c'est une des raisons pour lesquelles il y a tant de nouvelles traductions de trucs... C'est une des choses qui peut se dire comme une... ouais, un changement des critères dominants." (Jean-Pierre Romano)<sup>1</sup>

### *Is the filter too wide?*

We shall now return to the idea of the 'filter of selection' of the French publishing world with regard to Italian literature. It was evoked above in the perspective of the editorial dynamics that take part in the success of books. When the interviewees were asked how they would define the literary situation in contemporary Italy, many answered in terms of quality and they gave me an overall evaluation of the latest trends in Italian literary production. This is significant as the question was deliberately open, which means that they could have chosen other factors:

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Pierre Romano's view seems to be in opposition to Even-Zohar's analysis presented in Chapter 1, namely the shift to target-oriented paradigm. However, there are diverging opinions among the interviewees: some of them assert the necessity to stick to the text the most possible, which can be interpreted as a source-oriented approach: "Je crois que la fidélité doit être absolue." (Claude Muccino). Others consider that the translator is free to transform the text, adapt it to the target culture: "Pour moi le bouquin est un objet qui est sur le marché, qui n'appartient pas plus à l'auteur qu'une voiture, lorsqu'on me la vend, n'appartient à... au constructeur, d'accord? Donc à partir de là, je l'interprète à ma manière." (Henri Jouvenet).

*"Et elle vous Paraît comment, la situation littéraire en Italie?"*

Je la comparerais à la situation française, en fait. Il y a de très bons auteurs. Il n'y a pas de courants très forts, d'école... il y a de bons auteurs, il y a une vie littéraire, il y a une sorte de... des beaux livres qui *Paraissent*, qui ont une audience à l'intérieur de l'Italie et à l'extérieur."  
(Jérôme Dupuy)

Jérôme Dupuy's answer illustrates the plurality of possible answers. He was the only one who gave a broad answer. The others were more laconic.

*"Et elle vous Paraît comment, la situation littéraire en Italie?"*

Moi je pense que le niveau actuel de la littérature italienne n'est quand même pas très fort, donc on a publié pas mal de trucs, bon..."  
(Laure Fougère)

"C'est vrai qu'il y a beaucoup d'écrivains en Italie, actuellement, et puis il y a une édition qui a tenté de se relancer... alors, pour des bonnes et des mauvaises raisons, ça c'est un autre problème, de qualité. (...)

Moi je suis un peu accablé par tout ce qui sort. Parce que là, en France, alors ça a un impact. Parce que, vu la dynamique de l'édition italienne, alors là l'édition française reflète cette dynamique, se laisse impressionner. Parce que, je vous dis, tout ce que j'ai vu pour l'instant c'est des livres qui, au fond, s'ils n'avaient pas été publiés, ça n'aurait pas été extrêmement grave."

(Jacques Laplace)

These two abstracts are interesting as they represent a more general view, in other words, they emphasize that this is a contemporary problem. It thus conveys the idea that the current state of Italian literature is not good. There is always an implicit reference to the previous period – the 1980s boom – as a golden age when the quality was higher. However, these statements need to be investigated further in order to draw more nuanced conclusions.

### *Some talent anyway...*

"On a traduit là-dedans un certain nombre de textes qui sont à mon sens totalement dépourvus d'intérêt, qui méritaient absolument pas l'investissement, qui n'est pas négligeable, de fabriquer une traduction et de la mettre sur le marché. Il y en a quand même quelques uns qui surnagent, quelqu'un comme Niccolo' Ammaniti par exemple. Mais ce que publie Ammaniti maintenant, en particulier le dernier, "Io non ho paura", qui va sortir chez Grasset ces jours-ci, est un roman qui répond à de tous autres critères sur le plan esthétique, et à mon avis c'est véritablement une œuvre d'écrivain. N'empêche que c'est un phénomène qu'on ne peut pas rayer d'un revers de main, parce que, à partir du moment où ça motive, ça implique 100 000 ou 200 000 lecteurs, il y a bien probablement une attente quelque part, une demande, et que cette demande mérite d'être analysée." (Marco Guglielmi)

Marco Guglielmi is quite categorical about the lack of quality of some Italian novels; however he admits that there are some exceptions, such as Ammaniti. It often happened that the interviewees were quite critical about the situation of Italian literature, and then suddenly became extremely enthusiastic about specific authors. It is interesting to note that, although the interviewees were quite coherent, they often contradicted themselves on this particular point, firstly by saying that nothing could be saved and then by praising a book for its literary qualities. We will deal with this

in the next section, however it should be noted that there is a discrepancy between what is defined by the members of the field as "good" literature and what the public buys. This brings us back to the distinction between literary and commercial success.

"Donc, la réception de la littérature italienne a bénéficié, justement, de l'ampleur de la vision de quelqu'un comme Magris, ou d'une autre façon de Citati, qui sont des écrivains, pour moi, relativement populaires... cultivés populaires. C'est un type d'écriture commerciale mais intéressante, qui remonte un peu le niveau, je trouve. C'est pas du tout la littérature commerciale de bas étage. Je considère pas Magris comme un grand écrivain. C'est un bon écrivain, quelqu'un d'habile, qui a renouvelé, aussi, un genre impur, qui est typique de l'époque, partout à travers le monde, où la tranche de vie naturaliste ne correspond pas du tout au monde dans lequel nous vivons, ni son juste rendu littéraire, si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi, même s'il y a pas un rapport d'équivalence entre les deux domaines... Donc, ils ont rénové ce genre littéraire en introduisant une dimension essayistique dans la narration. Et c'est ce qu'ils font plus ou moins bien selon les œuvres. Enfin, Citati, il fait seulement des biographies... en se mettant à la place de Dieu, la faiblesse du projet est là, il se met à la place du personnage et pas à sa place, c'est la que bât blesse... Il fait ça très bien, on peut ne pas être d'accord avec le point de vue, ce qui est mon cas, mais c'est bien fait, ça témoigne d'une culture remarquable. C'est-à-dire que ce qu'on voit..." (Paul Matonti)

This point encompasses many of the dimensions of our research question. Firstly, it conveys the idea of an opposition between literary and economic success (and judgement). Secondly, it indirectly highlights the acceleration of translations that can be related to the notion cultural globalisation: the large amount of books published makes it more difficult to identify the "good ones" (in a way, they are proportionally rarer). This constitutes a radical change in comparison to the 1980s, which was a period of discovery of young talents. Nowadays, the publication of young talented authors and potential best-sellers (which are seldom the same thing) are concomitant, and it is more difficult to identify which one influenced the other. This also raises the issue of the specificities of Italian literature as represented by the specialists, in other words, what makes it Italian? Can we say that cultural globalisation tends to erase these literary and cultural specificities and that this is the reason why the Italian specialists are losing interest in the contemporary literary work?

### 1.3. Is Italian literature so Italian?

In this section, we shall try to understand what makes Italian literature Italian, and at the same time what makes Italian literature international. The ambiguity is that this literature seems to be deeply rooted in an Italian reality, at least this is the way most interviewees present it, and at the same time it is of interest for the French. This reminds us of the fascination of the French for Italy in general, and in this way literature is viewed as an incarnation of this Italian reality (that the French find so charming). Of course, this also has to be envisaged in the context of the cultural openness of the French, which is also enhanced by the multiplication of the contacts between

various cultures (that are part of the so-called cultural globalisation). The question is to understand whether the French are attracted to Italian literature because it is Italian, or because it is different. However, in this case we are dealing here with the representations of the members of the field of publishing of Italian literature in France, which means that our analysis has a specific target, which concentrates on pointing out the interactions between the publishers and the Italian specialists at the level of collective representations.

*Referentiality: a literature rooted in a specific social reality*

The first dimension of 'italianity' links with the themes evoked above: is Italian literature mostly Italian, is it rooted elsewhere, or transposable?

"Ceci dit, moi j'ai l'impression que les nouvelles tendances, donc les Cannibales, parce que c'est ça, en fait, Jack Frusciante et tout le reste, n'a pas une bonne réception en France. Et je crois pour une raison très simple... y compris Rossana Campo. (...) Et je crois, c'est mon idée, que l'une des raisons c'est que cette littérature est très référentielle. Elle a un sens pour les italiens parce qu'elle est très calée dans des réalités sociologiques italiennes." (Sandra Di Maggio)

"Ce qui est drôle, c'est qu'en Italie il y a une littérature très réaliste, très liée à la réalité sociale, mais très nombriliste. On ne sort pas du petit cercle, de son group d'amis, de sa ville, de son quartier, de ses problèmes... Alors, quel intérêt ça peut avoir pour des allemands?

*C'est un peu comme pour les français, finalement...*

Oui, alors, peut-être pour les français il y a une proximité, et il y a une littérature française qui est un peu comme ça, un peu nombriliste. Alors qu'en Allemagne, on sait que ça fonctionne pas. On sait qu'ils ont plus le goût des littératures en prise directe avec les vrais problèmes sociaux, en Italie il y a pas ça."

(Guido Pierucci)

Both of these interviewees confirm the idea that the themes of Italian literature are deeply rooted in Italian reality. They mean that the actions take place in Italy, the cultural references are those of Italian music, television, and so on. However, it can be questioned whether the framework of the action really matters. For instance, Ammaniti's last novel *Io non ho paura* deals with a group of children in a small village in the south of Italy. In a way, many of the scenes described are deeply rooted in this region, as he points at some very specific features such as the influence of the Mafia. The location of the story is not precise, but the reader clearly understands that it takes place in the south of Italy; but the action itself (a nine year-old child's discovery of violence) is universal to the extent that it could be transposed anywhere, at least anywhere in the Occidental world. The issue of context is complicated as universality can be stronger in texts that are apparently rooted in a social reality;<sup>1</sup> however, at the same time, the idea of "italianity" is difficult to distinguish from that of exoticism.

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<sup>1</sup> This is Casanova's theses in her *République mondiale des lettres* (Casanova Pascale 1999); she illustrates it with the example of James Joyce, among others.

"Dans les années 1990, j'avais plutôt l'impression qu'il y avait une ouverture vers autre chose. C'est-à-dire que, autant pendant très longtemps la littérature italienne avait été très marquée parce que précisément de façon naturelle elle était plutôt tournée vers les problèmes spécifiques à l'Italie, d'un point de vue sociologique, ou historique, ou culturel... Autant dans les années 1990 on a vu un certain nombre d'auteur, par exemple... je sais pas, Tabucchi me vient à l'esprit... se tourner vers des espaces plus larges, et donc s'ouvrir à des dimensions extra-italiennes. Et aujourd'hui, on a à la fois cette dimension extra-italienne, plutôt américanisante, et en même temps un peu, volontairement, je sais pas, il faudrait voir... et en même temps, un ancrage dans les régions du point de vue... il y a cette espèce de mélange de la culture américaine, d'appropriation de la culture américaine à outrance, et puis... mais non pas adapté à une dimension nationale ou européenne, mais adapté à la dimension d'une région, c'est ce que je ressens aujourd'hui. Dans les années 1990, puisque c'est ce qui vous intéresse, j'avais l'impression au contraire d'une grande ouverture vers des choses qui, encore une fois, n'étaient pas coutumières en Italie chez les écrivains, des choses qui mettaient la littérature italienne... mais tout ça c'est très difficile à expliquer, c'est un sentiment... la littérature italienne au diapason de l'Europe, avec cette espèce de sentiment de voyage à travers l'Europe, d'intérêt pour ce qui se passait, qui au Portugal, qui en France, qui en Allemagne, etc. Il y avait cette espèce de, ce sentiment de bol d'air qui n'existe plus aujourd'hui, enfin, qui existe de manière différente. Je le répète encore une fois, aujourd'hui c'est plutôt Amérique plus dialecte." (Henri Jouvenet)

According to Henri Jouvenet, the opening of literature in the 1990s (in terms of the context of the action) gave a new breath to the use of regional features, such as dialect. In fact, the importance of regional differences is much bigger than in most other European countries, and it is one of the possible expressions of what we are trying to define as 'specifically Italian'.

### *Regions*

The unification of Italy was a relatively recent occurrence (1861), and this is one of the main reasons why the regional languages and practices have continued to exist over the years in comparison to most other countries. The linguistic unity occurred through the media, especially television, after the Second World war. The older generations still speak the dialects, and it is only recently that children have been raised with a single form of Italian. As these regional differences tend to decrease, there is also a movement, especially in arts and literature, which encourages the return to the roots in order to provide the public with original stories. Camilleri is an interesting example of the use of his Sicilian roots: he provides the reader with many stereotypes, not to say clichés, that are perceived – especially abroad – as typical of Sicily.<sup>1</sup> However, these regional settings also raise the issue of universality, as Myreille Jacob stated very clearly during her interview:

"Bon, il y a des gens qui trouvent leur sens à l'intérieur de... du fait d'être italien, ou sicilien... quelqu'un comme Consolo, par exemple, c'est quelqu'un de profondément sicilien... c'est les racines. Après, bon, on peut dépasser ça et atteindre un universel, c'est ce qu'à fait Pirandello. Moi, Eco, je le vois comme quelqu'un qui absorbe... bon, à la limite, quand il est en France, il devient français. Il réagit comme un italien en France, bien sûr, mais il a pas les frontières de

<sup>1</sup> This example will be analysed more in-depth in chapter seven.

son pays... elles ne sont pas les limites de son corps, ni de son esprit. J'ai l'impression qu'il y a certains écrivains italiens, je n'ai pas de noms à l'esprit, qui sont définis par la terre d'où ils viennent..." (Myreille Jacob)

### *Writing and style*

Finally, the question of writing is part of what is specifically Italian, especially as there are many ways of speaking and writing Italian language. This can be approached through the prism of generations:

"La littérature italienne, je dirais, est plutôt... mais ça c'est aussi les particularités... je crois pas que ce soit vénitien, milanais ou romain, c'est un langage commun de toute une génération. Je pense que dans la littérature italienne aujourd'hui il y a un côté plus générationnel qu'il y a dans la littérature jeune... française." (Guido Pierucci)

The above passage shows how the unification of Italian culture occurred through the creation of a common language, which belongs to a particular generation. In this way, there are more similarities between the language of the Italian and the French teenagers than between the language of an Italian teenager and their grand-parents. This raises the issue of the social division of language (which also applies to many other fields, such as cultural references, for instance). Therefore, we should ask whether this is vertical or horizontal. In this chapter, it is argued that in our case the unified language of a generation conveys a series of cultural references, or even codes, that constitute part of what we call 'italianity'. The young Italian writers are extremely rooted in their generation.

"Je me souviens avoir lu il y a quelques années une interview de Rossana Campo qui justifiait le fait qu'elle écrivait avec un jargon très proche des jeunes de l'époque, elle disait, il faut écrire comme on parle. Moi je faisais remarquer que c'est comment on parle à ce moment-là. Cinq ans après, dix ans après, ça n'a aucun sens pour personne. Et donc, on peut le faire, bien sûr, mais il faut qu'il y ait quelque chose de plus profond, sinon ça n'a aucun sens. Et je pense que ce sont toutes les limites des jeunes écrivains, ils sont extrêmement référencés dans le langage, dans la culture, dans une forme de sous-culture. Parce que, si en France il y a des sous-cultures, ce sont pas les mêmes qu'en Italie. Donc, les bandes dessinées, les sports... Ça évoque des choses différentes." (Sandra Di Maggio)

"Après, il y a des écrivains italiens qui sont universels. Primo Anna Moresco, il est pas italien dans son écriture, il l'est dans ce qu'il raconte." (Yves Tessarin)

In contrast with Sandra Di Maggio, Yves Tessarin's example differentiates between 'italianity' and the Italian language. We wonder whether this way of writing can touch the French public (this also involves the translator): even though they use a language that is common to a generation and that transcends national boundaries, it should not be assumed that French or Spanish literature have used it the same way.

"Je pense que les jeunes auteurs, que ce soit Ammaniti, ou que ce soit... comment s'appelle-t-il, je ne connais que lui... l'écrivain turinois qui écrit pour la Stampa....? Publié par Grasset, d'ailleurs... ça me reviendra. Donc, je pense que dans ces écrivains... Lucarelli, aussi, c'est vrai que c'est une façon d'écrire un tout petit peu moderne, et qu'on n'a pas tellement aujourd'hui



en France. Alors, ça je pense que c'est effectivement une voix intéressante, une voix avec un *x*, c'est-à-dire que c'est quelque chose qu'on ne retrouve pas dans la littérature française."  
(Guido Pierucci)

In fact, this use of the language could constitute a real specificity of contemporary Italian literature. Creating the sense of 'what is Italian' is not in the choice of the location of the action, nor the action itself, but in the adoption of a language that is deeply rooted in a social reality, which can be universal, just as any literary text. However, we also need to understand whether this applies to any genre of contemporary Italian literature. In fact, we will argue that it is specific to a particular genre, namely detective stories.

#### 1.4. The notion of a genre: the example of detective stories

The genre is another dimension to take into account when describing a book (the action, the place, the writing, the language, and so on.). When the interviewees were asked if there is an Italian genre, namely, a genre where Italian literature is particularly rich, they all stated that there was no specific Italian genre, but rather a clearly eclectic character of Italian literature.

"On voit des choses vraiment extrêmement différentes. On traduit des romans sentimentaux à l'eau de rose, on traduit de la littérature d'avant-garde, on traduit de la science-fiction... il y a des phénomènes de mode." (Marco Guglielmi)

Some interviewees even related the question of genre to that of success, arguing that success can be at the basis of the good reception of a book.

"Je crois que les succès comme Umberto Eco, ou même dans un tout autre genre, comme Susanna Tamaro, c'est lié au genre. C'est-à-dire, Umberto Eco, c'était un polar médiéval extraordinaire, métaphysique, érudit... on pourrait rajouter une liste d'adjectifs. Tamaro, c'était un nouveau genre... [*rire*], bon, je voudrais pas être trop péjoratif. C'était une histoire d'amour à l'eau de rose, avec là aussi, bon, une approche un peu mystique, religieuse, de la vie quotidienne, je crois que ça correspondait à quelque chose." (Jean Dupasquier)

This means that there are some genres that are appreciated by the French public, independent of the country that the book comes from. Detective stories could be one of these, as testified by the commercial success of this genre. However, in this field (like many others) the French market is largely dominated by Anglo-American literature and there is also a strong French tradition of thrillers (*polars*) that has persisted over the years. However, it is quite rare to read detective stories from other countries. In Italy, the genre of detective stories is quite recent.

"Par exemple, en ce qui concerne le roman policier italien, c'est une découverte récente mais c'est dû au fait que les italiens se sont mis eux-mêmes au roman policier, je dirais après 1970, à peu près... avant il n'y en avait guère. Maintenant il y en a, et il y en a plein, et ils sont de très bonne qualité. Euh, l'édition a suivi. Donc, maintenant, c'est pas 2 ou 3 titres par an mais c'est quelque fois 20 ou 30, et ils sortent... la Série Noire par exemple, les grandes collections de prestige font une place importante à des auteurs italiens. Là il y a... tout d'un coup il y a un profil qui est fonctionnel, je dirais, dans ce domaine." (Marco Guglielmi)

"Oui, alors pour Camilleri c'est autre chose, c'est un genre qui est privilégié, c'est le roman policier. Et il y a quand même une tradition du roman policier en France, qui a été relancée en Italie parce que en Italie elle a eu du mal à prendre... déjà sous le fascisme, c'était très difficile... après, quand Sciascia, par exemple, a utilisé le genre policier pour faire passer des messages, le genre a été anobli, en quelque sorte, je crois. Et du coup, quand Camilleri est arrivé dans les années 1990, le genre était déjà... ce n'était plus de la sous-littérature, de la para-littérature... et là, depuis quelques temps, il y a une espèce de renouveau du genre policier." (Marie-Pierre Leborgne)

The emergence of detective stories in Italy took place in a context in which this genre was considered as a sub-literature, in comparison to more classical forms of novels.

"Ca a été concomitant. C'est-à-dire, il y a commencé à y avoir une reconnaissance du roman noir en Italie, en même temps qu'en France on publiait ces auteurs-là. Mais je pense que c'est lié aussi au succès de Camilleri, Camilleri a contribué nettement à la reconnaissance du genre. Cela dit, un genre qui avait déjà été honoré par des auteurs de littérature générale comme Sciascia ou comme Gadda. Mais, ça restait des phénomènes très isolés. Si vous voulez, il y avait une prégnance de la culture académique en Italie qui était encore plus forte qu'en France, quoi, parce qu'en France le polar a toujours été considéré avec intérêt par une grande partie des intellectuels. Il y a toujours eu un intérêt des intellos pour... La série noire a été lancée par quelqu'un qui était un ami des surréalistes. Duhamel c'était un type... un intello parisien, Germano Pratin, quoi! Bon, Boris Vian, il y a eu Sartre qui s'est beaucoup intéressé au polar. Beaucoup d'auteurs français, alors qu'en Italie il y a quand même ce côté un peu... beaucoup plus méprisant. (Sylvain Renucci)

This contemptuous attitude of the critique towards the detective novels explains why this genre has had a late development in Italy. From our perspective, it is interesting that this explosion of the genre happened at a time of intensification of the translations of Italian novels into French (they were concomitant); and the first Italian *polars* were thus translated very quickly. We could say that it was a moment where the 'filter' of selection was broad, and the young genre profited from a wider movement of translation. On the contrary, it could be argued that the interest for the young genre led to more publications of Italian novels in France. Both of these opinions appeared in the interviews.

"J'ai l'impression qu'il y a un regain d'intérêt pour l'italien... Je pense que le secteur du polar a beaucoup contribué à ça. Il y a eu un dynamisme autour du polar, et du coup il y a un intérêt général pour l'italien.

*Un intérêt qui est donc lié au polar?*

Bon, je sais pas, mais j'ai l'impression que le polar a un peu aidé à ça, qu'il a relancé la machine, il a relancé... d'une part il a fait monter le nombre de traductions... parce qu'il y eu pas mal d'auteurs italiens, de "noirs" plus que de polars, qui ont été traduits. Et puis, d'autre part, du coup il a déclenché un intérêt général pour l'italien."

(Sylvain Renucci)

"Je crois qu'il y a surtout une évolution dans la littérature italienne elle-même. Par exemple l'évolution du polar, avant c'était pas la référence... si on pensait littérature italienne on pensait pas au policier, à part Sciascia. Or maintenant il semblerait qu'il y ait vraiment, en tout cas quantitativement, il y a quand même une réelle présence du polar italien. Et même, on va dire qu'une bonne partie de la vague des romans italiens est portée, amenée par ses auteurs là. (...) Il me semble que l'arrivée de tous ces romans en France a bénéficié de cette entrée par le biais des polars. Je dis pas que c'est la cause, mais en tout cas le fait que ce

courant fonctionne bien entraîne, a un effet sur le reste. Je dis pas que c'est déterminant, mais ça a un effet positif sur le reste, d'accompagnement." (Danièle Perrineau)

In these two extracts there is the idea that the *polar* had been giving momentum to the rest of Italian literature. Some interviewees were more careful in their statements, however, and insisted on the fact that the genre itself was led by a few authors.

"Actuellement il y a la mode des polars. On en traduit beaucoup, mais l'Italie en produit beaucoup brusquement alors qu'elle en faisait pas du tout avant, c'est marrant. (...)

*Et pourquoi cette explosion du polar en Italie?*

Peut-être parce que le polar anglo-saxon marche bien, donc ils se sont dit... après tout, ça a démarré il y a pas si longtemps... Est-ce que ça a démarré avec Camilleri? je pense pas... Bon, les cannibales, c'est pas vraiment des policiers... et puis c'est après Camilleri. Ça fait une dizaine d'années. On a aimé, il y avait une recherche dans son langage, ça a dû mettre le genre à la mode. Mais ça veut pas dire que tout est bon."

(Delphine Vasseur)

In fact, the genre was not welcomed in France as a whole: a few authors emerged and had commercial and symbolic success, but there was also a confusion between Italian *polar* and the movement started by the Cannibals.

"Il y a une évolution de la littérature italienne en général. Il y a le roman policier, qu'on ne faisait pas avant, qui avant avait une place mineure, il y a ce que les italiens appellent les cannibales, la jeune littérature... On a beaucoup traduit de choses qui étaient un peu marginales.

*Elles ont eu du succès, relativement par rapport aux autres?*

Le roman policier, oui. Enfin, pas tout, mais certains textes sont sortis du nombre et ont marché, quelques uns. Les cannibales, je pense pas."

(Anna Moresco)

It appears that Italian *polars* had a certain commercial success. In particular, a few authors emerged as favourites, such as Andrea Camilleri, Carlo Lucarelli and Marcello Fois. The point that interests us is to understand whether this success is somehow related to the fact that these authors are Italian. As Guido Pierucci underlined, Lucarelli has a very specific way of writing, which corresponds to this style that we defined above as rooted in Italian social reality. Moreover, most of his novels take place in Bologna, and his accurate descriptions of the location are strongly linked to the context of the action. However, what are the reasons for the interest of the French public? Is it based on the fact that the novel is Italian or that it is a *polar*, or both? This remains an open question.

"C'est vrai que, maintenant, le polar italien commence à être... alors, est-ce que les gens qui lisent du polar ont une attente particulière pour le polar italien... Non, je crois pas, je crois que les gens veulent lire un bon polar, c'est tout. Je sais pas. Je suis pas un grand spécialiste du polar. Mais ça commence à être un petit phénomène, il y a pas mal d'auteurs qui marchent bien en polar. Mais je crois pas que les gens lisent ça parce que c'est italien, non." (Jean Dupasquier)

The *polar* is an interesting example of a genre from our perspective because it illustrates the discrepancy between what the publishers define as "good" literature and what they publish to

attain commercial success. It also involves other dimensions, such as the writing style, the rooting in social reality and the generation effect, that contribute to the construction of the notion of what is specifically Italian and adds to our image of collective representations of Italy in France.

Until now, we have focused on the indigenous point of view, that of the specialists (specialised in Italian literature and members of the field of publishing of Italian literature in France). In particular, we have seen that *a posteriori* the booms in the publications are interpreted as ephemeral, and are often perceived as misunderstandings (i.e. definition according to criteria that are strictly internal to the field) of the quality of certain books. When the interviewees deal with the actual period, they tend to be less radical in their representations, or more careful, as shown in the example of detective stories. We will now look at the way the members of the field analyse the expectations of the public in terms of Italian literature, and how these can be related to their own idea of the functioning of editorial trends.

## 2. THE FRENCH PUBLIC AND ITALIAN LITERATURE

The discrepancy we have highlighted between the publishers' literary taste and the issue of commercial success raises the issue of the public as an actor in the field of publication. In fact, although the publishers endeavour to stick to their personal evaluation of what is "good" literature, they are constrained to act in line with what they think will be appreciated (i.e. bought) by the public. In fact, if the books they publish are not bought, there is a possibility that they might go bankrupt and disappear from the market. Their existence is bound to their ability to adapt to the public's expectations, needs and taste. This link, which we have called the economic constraint, was conveyed in an implicit manner throughout the interviews. The first way of analysing it is to look at how the publishers define success, and whether they consider Italian literature to be successful in France.

### 2.1. Success and impact

One of the questions which was systematically asked during all of the interviews was "do you think that Italian literature is successful in France?". Part of the interviewees answered according to their own experience, or based on the sales figures, or on the impression they got from the media. But some of them seemed to find the question quite disturbing, in the sense that they did

not give a direct answer. This was unusual to the extent that this topic was not sensitive, or delicate (there are no political issues, for instance), and it is the only moment they seemed to be uneasy. Some of them reacted to the fact I was asking this particular question without necessarily answering it directly.

*"Est-ce que la littérature italienne a du succès en France ?*

Ecoutez, quand on voit... vous me direz, c'est un succès mondial, mais quand on voit le succès d'Umberto Eco en France, il est quand même... c'est énorme.... Pourquoi vous me posez cette question ?"

(Charles Chevallier)

In this case, the interviewee started to answer and then hesitated and wanted to know the reason for this question. He had previously been speaking about whether his Italian books were selling well; we can assume that this was a difficult question as it implicated a parallel between these sales (which were not bad) and the overall sales of Italian literature in France. His behaviour was surprising, also because he was the first one to react this way (it was the eighth interview). In other cases, their reaction was less direct, however they could only give a mixed response. The non-verbal expressions were also very clear, which indicated perplexity, indecision, and sometimes annoyance.

*"Est-ce que vous trouvez que la littérature italienne a du succès aujourd'hui en France?*

Ecoutez, c'est une vaste question. Tout dépend ce qu'on appelle littérature, et tout dépend ce qu'on appelle succès. Vous savez, sous des mots aussi simples, il se regroupe des variétés et des situations extrêmement différentes. Alors, je pourrais vous répondre oui, la littérature italienne a beaucoup de succès, parce que Umberto Eco est publié en France, et il est parmi les auteurs étrangers les plus vendus en France. Donc... Mais, est-ce que Umberto Eco c'est de la littérature italienne? Ecoutez, je pourrais vous dire oui, je pourrais vous dire non, ça dépend à quel moment on se place."

(Guido Pierucci)

*"Est-ce que vous diriez que la littérature italienne a du succès en France ?*

Bon, c'est toujours difficile de parler globalement. Déjà, est-ce qu'il y a une littérature française, est-ce qu'il y a une littérature italienne... bon, aujourd'hui, je parle de... on est en 2003... Oui, ça doit vouloir dire quelque chose, sûrement, qu'il y a un fait littéraire français et un fait littéraire italien."

(Claude Muccino)

*"Est-ce que vous pensez que la littérature italienne a du succès en France, globalement?*

Oui et non. Je pense qu'entre la France et l'Italie il y a des malentendus extraordinaires. Je pense qu'il y a une curiosité certaine, on a vu le succès au salon du livre des auteurs italiens, mais je pense qu'il y a un malentendu, c'est très étrange... mais c'est peut-être des questions personnelles..."

(Irène Thibaud)

The overall impression is that these interviewees were extremely cautious in their responses, as if it was a difficult question, or they were annoyed because they are used to being asked this question. We can assume that their annoyance also came from the fact that they are not specialists, and thus they did not feel qualified to answer, but they still did not want to admit that they could not

answer. However, most interviewees replied directly and the answers were very varied. A few of them focused on particular authors, and did not give a general answer (even though the question was deliberately vague).

*"Est-ce que vous pensez que la littérature italienne a du succès en France?"*

Je dirais, certains auteurs. Alors, évidemment, pas forcément dans les années 1990, par exemple Buzzati. Moi j'ai travaillé sur Buzzati, il a eu un grand succès en France, je dirais que même Buzzati a été redécouvert par les italiens grâce à ce qu'ont fait les français. (...) Ca c'est dans les anciens. Je n'ai pas suivi vraiment... là je ne suis pas au fait de ce qui se traduit ces derniers-temps, mais par exemple... Par exemple, Consolo, il est très bien reçu, alors qu'il est très difficile à lire. Il est traduit mais je pense que c'est un auteur non seulement difficile à lire en français, mais aussi difficile à lire en italien. Alors, je crois que il y a un phénomène ces dernières années qui s'est développé à la fois en Italie et en France, c'est Camilleri."

(Marie-Pierre Leborgne)

"Il y a des livres qui marchent très bien en Italie, par exemple comme Consolo, c'est inexplicable, qui marche pas du tout en France. Vous pouvez sortir... même Gallimard... bon, c'est pas un petit qui l'a sorti ! Ca marche pas. C'est difficile à comprendre, très difficile, et je crois que dans les autres littératures c'est la même chose. Il y a des choses qui marchent, des choses qui marchent pas. Voilà." (Paul Matonti)

In these two pieces, there is a reference to the performance of the books in Italy, in terms of accessibility and success. This means that when these interviewees did not think in terms of sales in France, but instead in terms of a comparison with Italy.

"Donc ce n'est pas le cas pour toute la littérature italienne, parce qu'il y a aussi des auteurs qui se vendent très bien. Evidemment il y a Umberto Eco, mais pas uniquement Umberto Eco, il y a... Rosetta Loy se vend bien. Qui d'autre? Erri de Luca, et puis il y a maintenant Camilleri, même s'il n'a pas le succès qu'il a en Italie, Andrea Camilleri, c'est très différent mais quand même. Bon, il faut pas exagérer, il y a des auteurs qui fonctionnent, en littérature italienne." (Paul Darlignac)

In the above passage, Paul Darlignac was trying to give an answer, which he had clearly not explicitly thought about it beforehand. If we compare this to the two previous pieces, we can assume that some interviewees not only did not have any preconceived view on whether Italian literature is successful in France, but also they had no clear idea of what "successful" meant. It was assumed that they would think in terms of sales, or critical acclaim.

"Je crois qu'il y a à la fois une bonne... bon, une sorte de familiarité qu'on a avec cette littérature, et aussi globalement pas mal de succès. Bon, non, moi je crois que la littérature italienne c'est pas du tout un domaine qui nous pose problème.

*En termes de ventes ça se passe bien?*

Ah, oui, tout à fait. Même très bien, bon, X tourne autour de 30 000... c'est quand même des ventes importantes en littérature étrangère. Bon, tout n'est pas à ce niveau, notamment dans l'Arpenteur où on fait des choses encore plus littéraires... Quand on fait un auteur comme Y, qui est un auteur que j'aime beaucoup, avec un livre aussi original, mais un peu loufoque, que Ville sans fin, bon, ça c'est des toutes petites ventes, ça tourne autour de 1000, 1500. Mais en littérature générale... en littérature étrangère de manière générale, bon, 1000, 1500, c'est pas... c'est une chose qu'on a, quoi, qui nous arrive, bon. Donc on n'est pas inquiets. Et puis on a aussi la patience de se dire que le prochain livre marchera mieux... Mais bon, en termes de littérature italienne, nous on peut dire qu'on a plutôt des bons résultats."

(Jean Dupasquier)

*"Ca a du succès, la littérature italienne, chez vous ?*

C'est très moyen. Celle qui se vend le mieux, c'est X, et ça doit tourner autour de... il y en a un qui s'est vendu autour de 6000 exemplaires, je crois, et celui-là, donc on l'a sorti en mars dernier, on doit être à 4000... mais c'est celle qui se vend le mieux. Maintenant, on a des phénomènes, comme X, on a son premier livre. Evidemment, ce livre il avait... il se vendait très lentement, et maintenant qu'il est découvert par un public de plus en plus large, beaucoup reviennent à son premier texte, qui est un des plus beaux, qui est chez nous, qu'ils avaient pas lu, donc effectivement on l'a retiré, voilà. Mais sinon, on devait en avoir vendu péniblement 3000 depuis qu'on l'a sorti il y a très longtemps. Bon, là l'année dernière on l'a retiré pour le salon du livre, à nouveau on vient de faire un retraitage, voilà."

(Claudine Plessier)

In the first abstract, Jean Dupasquier spoke about sales because the question referred to this, whereas in the second Claudine Plessier spontaneously seemed to consider sales as the indicator of success. Overall, these pieces show that there is not always clear preconceived idea about how success can be defined. This does not relate to the majority of the cases, but it is interesting to the extent that commercial success seems to have become increasingly important in the editorial decisions. However, most interviewees gave a more general answer to the question.

*"Selon vous, est-ce que la littérature italienne a du succès en France ?*

Selon moi, je dirais oui. Et en tout cas il y a une curiosité énorme, je le vois parce que je suis sollicitée sans arrêt pour faire des conférences, en particulier dans les bibliothèques."

(Danièle Perrineau)

*"Est-ce que vous diriez que globalement la littérature italienne a du succès en France ?*

Bon, je crois que la vague italienne est un peu passée. Il y a eu, comme ça, une vague... mais globalement, on peut encore dire que la littérature italienne a du succès."

(Jean Dupasquier)

*"Est-ce que vous trouvez que globalement la littérature italienne a du succès en France ?*

Oui. Enfin, globalement, l'Italie, en France, ils adorent. Alors, la littérature italienne n'a pas l'impact de la littérature américaine, c'est clair. Mais globalement c'est une littérature qui est bien reçue, avec des tirages..."

(Yves Tessarin)

"Non, je pense que l'Italie a quand même un peu plus... enfin, le public français est un peu plus attentif que, par exemple, la littérature espagnole, ou la littérature allemande. A part quelque grands allemands ou espagnols... Oui, sur l'Italie, ils marchent assez... bon, c'est pas la littérature anglo-saxonne, évidemment ! Il y a un petit intérêt, quand même." (Monique Desmortiers)

*" Est-ce que vous diriez que globalement la littérature italienne a du succès en France ?*

Moi je crois que l'Italie bénéficie... a toujours bénéficié d'un petit plus par rapport à l'ensemble des littératures européennes au sens large... euh... une sorte, probablement, de cousinage. (...) il y a un terrain qui est propice, en gros, un facteur sympathie. C'est ça qui fait qu'elle a du succès."

(Thierry Durel)

These five interviewees are very positive about the success of Italian literature in France. It should be noted, however, that their criteria of evaluation is not explicit, and on the whole that it does not appear to relate to sales. The first refers to the success in libraries, the others to the

favourable reception of the public. However, there is a consensus on the success of Italian literature, which is shared by all of the interviewees.

*"Est-ce que la littérature italienne a du succès en France aujourd'hui?"*

Je sais pas. Disons qu'elle a une bonne réputation, à la différence d'il y a quelques années où elle n'en avait pas. Quand je dis il y a quelques années, je parle d'avant Umberto Eco. Mais pour le succès, je ne sais pas."

(Sandra Di Maggio)

Some interviewees had less clear-cut opinions, and did not give positive responses to the question. One of them spoke of a "median position" compared to other foreign literatures, but insisted on the fact that translated literature does not usually have any commercial success. In fact, many interviewees put forward the idea that Italian literature is not successful at all.

"Questi autori, magari hanno delle buone accoglienze di critica, ma non hanno delle buone accoglienze di pubblico. In altre parole, ottengono delle buone recensioni, magari su *Le Monde*, su *Libération*, *Livres hebdo*, *Magazine littéraire*, etc, etc... ma le vendite sono molto modeste."<sup>1</sup> (Carlo Baldini)

*"Est-ce que la littérature italienne a du succès en France?"*

Non. (...) Donc, depuis trois ans, l'achat de livres italiens par les éditeurs français a baissé... avait baissé, je parle avant le Salon du Livre... de 25%. (...) Il y a peu d'auteurs qui dépassent la barre des 10 000. Sauf Eco, et aujourd'hui Erri de Luca, Tamaro et Baricco. Ce sont les quatre qui se vendent. Les autres... enfin, j'en ai peut-être oublié un ou deux, mais dans l'ensemble la situation... ils sont tous en-dessous de 10 000, même quand ils ont un nom."

(Anna Moresco)

*"Et globalement, en France, la littérature italienne, ça marche ?"*

Non, je pense que non. Pas pas du tout, mais disons que quand on a créé la collection, tout de suite après, c'était dans les années 1980, il y a eu un phénomène de mode qui a fait qu'il y a eu un engouement pour la littérature italienne, et il y a beaucoup de maisons d'édition qui se sont lancées là-dedans, mais aujourd'hui, non, on ne peut pas dire..."

(Claudine Plessier)

"Vous savez, les ventes sont très faibles. Pour la littérature italienne, à l'exception de quelques auteurs qui se vendent bien, qui d'ailleurs sont plutôt des auteurs d'essais que de romans, c'est vraiment 1000-1500 exemplaires, pour la plupart. Et, enfin les autres éditeurs ont dû vous le dire! Et là c'était entre 4000 et 5000, ce qui est bien, ce sont de bonnes ventes." (Paul Darlignac)

These four interviewees agree on the fact that Italian literature does not sell very well. Apparently, it is very rare that an Italian book sells more than 10,000 copies.<sup>2</sup> In this case, we are again faced with this discrepancy between symbolic and commercial success: although Italian literature does not enjoy high sales, it has a good reputation and benefits from a certain *a priori* "sympathie" from the public. However, this idea was also questioned by some of the interviewees.

<sup>1</sup> "These authors might have a good reception in the critique, but they are not well received by the public. In other words, they have good reviews, maybe on *Le Monde*, on *Libération*, *Livres hebdo*, *Magazine littéraire*, and so on... but the sales are modest".

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, we were not able to access the sales figures, as there are no official statistics, and most publishers said they did not keep systematic track of their own sales. The only information available in this respect are these evocations during the interviews.



*"Est-ce que vous trouvez que la littérature italienne a du succès en France?"*

Ben, il y a des auteurs qui ont du succès, mais c'est toujours pareil, c'est des modes. Alors, il y a eu une mode après Umberto Eco, une première vague... et puis, après, on passe à une autre littérature... là, avec le Salon du livre, je sais pas, j'ai pas l'impression que les livres aient si bien marché que ça... il y avait trop de livres italiens, c'est ça le problème. C'est que quand on veut... quand il y a ces modes, quand il y a un salon... tous les éditeurs veulent traduire de l'italien, ils en publient.. et donc, on publie tout et n'importe quoi. Et donc, la personne qui ne connaît pas très bien la littérature italienne, qui achète un livre d'un auteur qui, bon, ne mériterait pas d'être traduit, il se dit... beurk, c'est ça... puis pof, ça retombe, il n'a pas envie d'en acheter un autre."

(Laure Fougère)

"Le public n'étant pas du tout idiot, à l'intérieur d'un petit public, si vous voulez, euh... a marché dans un premier temps, et dans un deuxième temps s'est dit, qu'est-ce que c'est que ces italiens qu'on nous sort. Et il y a eu une désaffection pour l'Italie... Nous on y allait tout doucement, en injectant de temps en temps un truc... Non pas par tactique, mais parce que ça demandait des moyens excessifs ! Et le public nous suivait, et après il en a eu marre, et ça a duré jusqu'à maintenant. C'est nouveau, maintenant, ça redémarre un peu." (Monique Desmortiers)

"On a pu continuer à faire notre travail comme on le faisait, c'est-à-dire à essayer de défendre les auteurs, à les imposer quand on pensait qu'ils étaient bien et bons, et de bons écrivains, donc voilà. Mais il faut savoir qu'il y a pas un public... à l'exception des noms, je sais pas quoi, Sciascia... les grands, quoi ! à l'exception de ces noms qui se vendent, ensuite, pour faire découvrir les auteurs et bon... c'est plus difficile." (Claudine Plessier)

These three pieces bring strong nuance to the idea of symbolic success. In fact, they present the public as the victim of the publishers' enthusiasm regarding Italian literature. There are publishing trends, which lead to the publications of books that should not have been translated, and thus the readers, disappointed, often lost interest in Italian literature, until a new publishing trend starts. This analysis sheds new light on our description of the trends in the previous section, to the extent that it includes another dimension, namely the declining interest of the public. This leads us to distinguish between the specialised and general public, as the sales are anyway quite low and therefore, it can be questioned to what extent the general public appreciates this literature.

*"Si on parle de la littérature italienne plus généralement, est-ce que vous diriez qu'elle a du succès en France?"*

Alors, ça, je pense que c'est relatif. Si vous posez la question à quelqu'un qui est pas forcément un italianisant il va vous parler peut-être d'Umberto Eco, et encore. Non, j'ai pas l'impression, par rapport à la littérature anglo-saxonne, elle est quand même moins connue. Et par rapport à d'autres... oui, sûrement plus que la littérature allemande, mais il y a pas grand-chose en allemand. Je dirais quand même que c'est la littérature anglo-saxonne qui domine, il me semble. (...) D'abord, faut voir aussi les tirages. Ils sont assez petits, à part quelques grands. Quand ils font 20000 ou 30000 c'est un best-seller."

(Delphine Vasseur)

Delphine Vasseur underlines the relative success of Italian literature in France, which in reality is confined to a milieu of specialists and to a rather small public. However, this theme has not been raised by any other interviewee, which means that even though the sales are quite low, not all publishers assume that they will not increase. The success of Umberto Eco and some others

(Susanna Tamaro, Erri de Luca, Antonio Tabucchi, Alessandro Baricco) shows that Italian literature can be successful in France. In a way, this success is a point of reference that somehow conditions the choice of publications: it contributes to the idea that Italian literature needs be more widely diffused in France.

"Donc, ma réflexion au bout de toutes ces années, ça serait un peu la suivante. C'est que, d'une part, si on compare la situation d'aujourd'hui à ce qu'elle était il y a 20 ans, pour la littérature italienne il y a quand même eu un changement considérable, énormément de lacunes qui ont été comblées, ce qui veut dire que potentiellement les lecteurs français peuvent avoir accès à beaucoup plus de choses qu'autrefois. Je n'en tire absolument pas la conclusion que de ce fait la littérature italienne est mieux connue. Parce que, une chose est que des livres soient accessibles, une autre chose est qu'on les lise largement. Ça coïncide pas forcément. Peut-être qu'elle est quand même, au bout du compte, un peu mieux connue, et ça c'est réconfortant." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

As a result of this collective action in favour of the diffusion of Italian literature in France, a gap has been filled throughout the years, and the panorama offered to the French public is now much wider. This does not necessarily mean that it is exhaustive, though: to what extent is it representative of the books published in Italy?

*"Est-ce que ce qui est traduit en français, en termes de littérature italienne, est relativement représentatif de ce qui se fait en Italie?"*

Ce qui se traduit, oui. Ce qui se vend, non. Je ne pense pas que, Eco mis à part, bon, même le succès de Tamaro n'est pas à la mesure du succès qu'elle a eu en Italie, ici elle a eu un succès moindre. Je m'en réjouis, personnellement... Bon, Baricco n'occupe pas la place en Italie qu'il occupe en France. Donc ça n'est pas exactement à l'identique. Il y a des auteurs qui ont un succès ici et dont les italiens se demandent pourquoi ils ont du succès, mais nul n'est prophète dans son pays. On sait très bien que parfois il est nécessaire de passer par l'étranger pour être reconnu dans son pays."

(Anna Moresco)

The public makes choices from all of the translated Italian literature in France and these choices differ from those of the Italian public. This means that literature is not perceived in the same way in different countries. If we were to look at the reception of Italian literature in Germany, for instance, we would probably find that the choices are different again, to the extent that taste is culturally rooted. This raises the issue of cultural differences between France and Italy, and more specifically to the way that they express themselves through literary taste. Moreover, we have seen that the discrepancy between symbolic and commercial success acts upon the publishers' definition of what they think the French public will like and buy. We shall now try to understand the ideas of the public's representations of Italy that lie beneath these definitions.

## 2.2. Exoticism or universality?

One way of approaching the question of exoticism and universality is to look at whether two cultures are defined as closed or distant. France and Italy are both Latin countries, and in

addition they have a common border, which gives them a kind of *a priori* proximity. Relatively, they seem closer than France and Japan, for instance. This seems like a trivial observation, however it is crucial in order to understand the collective representations. For example, the word "cousins" and "sisters" are often used to define the link between the two countries.<sup>1</sup> Our point here is to understand how this proximity is conveyed in the interviewees' discourse, and whether it is counterbalanced by the references to structural diversity.

"Alors, la littérature italienne, ne serait-ce que par une sensibilité latine et européenne, est beaucoup plus proche... c'est-à-dire que ce dont la littérature italienne nous parle est effectivement... sont des choses pas si éloignées des modes de vie, ou d'expression, ou des modes littéraires français." (Guido Pierucci)

*"Est-ce que vous pensez qu'un lecteur français, justement, quand il lit un livre italien, il a une attente particulière?"*

Alors, là, je sais pas. Je pense pas, quand même, que la littérature italienne, ce soit comme la chanson italienne, où on cherche des trucs romantiques, je pense pas... je sais pas du tout pourquoi un lecteur français est attiré par la littérature italienne... D'abord, c'est quand même assez proche de la littérature française, c'est moins rébarbatif que les littératures du nord, on comprend mieux. On est quand même proches des italiens..."  
(Laure Fougère)

Guido Pierucci's statement illustrates the idea that there is a common sensibility between France and Italy that prevails over cultural differences. In a way, his assertion is reinforced by the fact that he is Italian and lives in France, and is thus aware of cultural differences. His parallel between ways of life and literature confirms the idea that it is possible to consider literary texts as social expressions. Laure Fougère's position is less firm, as if she does not take this proximity for granted, but somehow accepts it with a kind of resignation. The phrase "*on comprend mieux*" emphasizes the fact that it is always difficult to understand a foreign culture, and that the proximity to Italy is more evident as compared with other countries. In fact, many interviewees underlined the existence of differences, that can pertain to details, but which are relevant in reflecting upon this proximity.

"Ah, oui, ça oui. Il y a beaucoup de livres, on se dit, le lecteur français, il ne va pas comprendre à quoi il fait référence... Quand il y a beaucoup de choses italiennes, c'est quand même un risque de publier le livre, parce qu'il faut vraiment connaître la culture italienne pour... Bon, moi par exemple, j'ai traduit un garçon qui s'appelle Andrea De Marchi, pour le Serpent à Plumes. Et donc, c'est un texte avec plein de références... C'est un texte que j'avais proposé, que j'aimais beaucoup. Et à un moment je me suis dit, il y a trop de références italiennes. Et comme je le connaissais, on a travaillé tous les deux pour essayer de... de transformer une partie des références italiennes en des références internationales... Ou en prenant des références italiennes qui parlaient aux français. Par exemple, il y avait des références à des acteurs italiens des années 1950, bon, les lecteurs français n'auraient jamais su qui c'était, ils auraient laissé tomber, donc on a cherché des correspondances. Je pense que ça aussi c'est... moi je me souviens, par exemple, B., à un moment il dit "cette fille c'est tout un disque de Battisti"... bon, quand on connaît pas Battisti, qu'est-ce qu'on fait? Moi à l'époque j'avais proposé de mettre, par exemple, Cat Stevens, ou un chanteur assez

<sup>1</sup> And we have shown so far how deeply and historically rooted these representations are.

romantique comme Battisti... Finalement, Martine avait dit, mais non, il y en a qui connaissent Battisti... et comme on pouvait pas se mettre en contact avec monsieur B., qui refusait de donner sa collaboration, finalement on a laissé Battisti. Mais à mon avis il fallait changer. C'est tellement immédiat, en italien." (Laure Fougère)

"Cette littérature est très référentielle. Elle a un sens pour les italiens parce qu'elle est très calée dans des réalités sociologiques italiennes. Par exemple, je suis en train de relire *Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo*, et quelques livres de Ballestra, il y a tout le temps des références dans le langage, la culture, qui sont extrêmement italiennes, mais au mauvais sens du terme, c'est-à-dire la télévision, le cinéma, la mode du moment... Alors que les écrivains comme Foix, qui sont très liés à des régions, dépassent ce cadre très limité de l'air du temps, et il y a évidemment une dimension italienne, mais de manière beaucoup plus profonde. Et donc passe beaucoup mieux en France. Ou du moins, en France, on voit l'Italie, mais pas la référence à un acteur de la télé dont on ne sait pas qui sait, donc on perd l'effet d'humour, l'effet de rappel, d'évocation de quelque chose. On comprend pas l'humour, on comprend même pas la profondeur du texte." (Sandra Di Maggio)

These two pieces deal with the referential aspect of Italian literature. The cultural differences highlighted in this case relate to the background of the reader, his set of cultural references; in other words, they refer to the national and linguistic roots such as music, television and so on. In order to understand a cultural reference, one needs to master the relevant codes in order to have a cultural insight that is rooted in the country of this culture. In this respect, the cultural proximity between France and Italy appears to be rather limited.

"Là par exemple, dans ce bouquin, je sais pas si vous l'avez lu, ça parle de la quête d'un père que le narrateur a connu, mais dont il se souvient plus parce qu'il voulait plus se souvenir d'un certain nombre de choses... le père était un père violent, artiste amateur par ailleurs et violent, battant sa mère, etc. Donc le narrateur ne veut pas s'en souvenir, de ce personnage, de père... et en même temps il cherche à le retrouver. Il n'y a pas beaucoup de difficulté du point de vue de la langue, c'est une histoire qui pourrait... qui pourrait être, se passer dans la Nièvre ou dans la Creuse, ou dans la région parisienne, ou vous voulez, même à Nanterre... et... mais en même temps il y a un certain nombre de choses liées à la fois au dialecte et à la vie napolitaine qui font que lorsque ça sera traduit il y aura des choses qui vont heurter, ou en tout cas... être différentes de ce que connaissent les lecteurs français." (Henri Jouvenet)

This statement raises an important question, namely, to what extent is the comprehension of the details that pertain to national differences important to the appreciation of the book? In fact, we can assume that there are also infinite cultural differences between two people from the same country, and that the national boundaries do not create more distance than the social ones, for instance. This leads us to the notion of exoticism. Literally, the adjective exotic refers to what belongs to foreign or distant countries. There are thus two levels of exoticism, the first one simply refers to otherness (that can be geographically close), whilst the second one conveys the idea of geographical distance. How are the differences between France and Italy related to this idea of exoticism? It will be argued that this is a question of representations, in terms of both the meaning of exoticism and of Italy itself.

"Oui, il y a peut-être une part d'exotisme. Pour nous, la Sicile, c'est un pays à part... bon, c'est le pays de la Mafia, bien entendu, c'est le pays des crimes, mais avec un paysage particulier, une cuisine... peut-être." (Marie-Pierre Leborgne)

In this context, the underlying definition of exoticism relates to distance, and even to clichés. In fact, the presentation of Sicily as the land of Mafia and good food is part of these collective images of Italy that we highlighted in chapter two. However, the interviewees do not always subscribe to these stereotypes.

"C'est qu'il n'y a pas un effet de, disons, d'exotisme. Le problème c'est que l'Italie est très très loin et très proche en même temps, comme vous le savez en circulant d'un pays à l'autre." (Paul Darlignac)

Paul Darlignac asserts that Italy is too close to France to be exotic, which means that his definition of exoticism is mainly geographical.

*"Pourquoi ça plaît en France ?*

Parce que on n'a pas la même chose ici, c'est exotique. D'ailleurs ça plaît pas qu'en France, ça plaît ailleurs."

(Paul Matonti)

Conversely, Paul Matonti presents exoticism as mere otherness. In the interviewees' opinion, the public expects Italian literature (and more generally translated literature) to provide them with a sense of otherness, something radically different.

"C'est une petite épreuve de l'étranger, en l'occurrence. C'est tout ce qui, à la fois d'un point de vue culturel et linguistique, force la langue d'arrivée, la culture d'arrivée, à faire des efforts pour se transformer, ça lui fait du bien." (Henri Jouvenet)

The '*experience of the foreign*' is a reference to the title of one of Antoine Berman's books (Berman, 1984). This experience implies the possibility for the reader to accept and to integrate something new into his or her own culture. This implies that the exotic shock is absorbed and that cultural differences are no longer an obstacle to the enjoyment of the book. This point is pivotal for our understanding of the link between exoticism and universality. The appropriation and integration of the features of the book that are most rooted in Italian culture by the reader is a necessary step in order to look beyond these differences and to access the overall message of the book.

"Je crois qu'un succès comme Erri De Luca, c'est pas par rapport à l'Italie; c'est par rapport à une vision de la vie, peut-être de la politique. Il a quand même une vision presque mystique de la vie quotidienne que les gens veulent... c'est plus pour ça que les gens lisent Erri de Luca, c'est pas parce qu'il leur apprend quelque chose sur l'Italie, je crois pas. (...) Je pourrais aller encore plus loin, des auteurs comme Citati qui parlent des mythes, bon, voilà, les gens ne le lisent pas par rapport à l'Italie. Quand un auteur comme Calasso nous entraîne en Inde, avec K, les gens le lisent pas par rapport à l'Italie. Donc, j'ai beaucoup d'exemples où même les auteurs ou les textes vont contre cette attente qu'on pourrait avoir par rapport à ce qui vient de l'Italie." (Jean Dupasquier)

Jean Dupasquier makes a clear distinction between the expectations pertaining to Italy and those pertaining to literature in general. As they deal with themes that concern readers outside Italian,

the universal nature of certain texts allows them to deal with themes other than those related to Italy.

*"Et pourquoi, à votre avis, ils plaisent au public français?"*

Alors, je vais reprendre l'exemple de Buzzati. Parce que les thèmes développés par Buzzati sont universels, le Désert des tartares, avec la fuite du temps... on le retrouve bien sûr chez beaucoup d'autres écrivains, Gracq en particulier, et même d'autres... Ce sont des choses qui parlent au lecteur, ce sont pas des choses intellectuelles, en quelque sorte. Mais c'est la vie de tous les jours sur laquelle on peut réfléchir. Ce sont des universaux, en quelque sorte."

(Marie-Pierre Leborgne)

The above excerpt affirms the previous statement. Italian literature is appreciated in two ways by the French public. Firstly, a reader may like a book because it provides him with stereotypes that coincide with his image of Italy and puts him in contact with otherness. Secondly, there are universal themes that transcend cultural differences (whether they are national, linguistic or social) and provide the reader with elements of reflection about life, which constitutes an essential function of literature. However, these two dimensions are not mutually exclusive, and can change with regard to different pieces of literature. The question of exoticism and universality is at the heart of the reflection on literary taste and expectations.

### 2.3. Expectations and tastes

The interviewees often expressed what they thought the public expects of Italian literature, but they also underlined their lack of knowledge in this respect.

*"Comment vous expliquez que les gens soient perdus à ce niveau-là ?*

Bon, d'abord, parce que l'italien n'est pas étudié, donc la plupart des adultes n'ont aucune référence de littérature italienne parce qu'ils ne sont pas passés par là à l'école, au lycée, à l'université. On va dire aussi qu'il y a très peu de production éditoriale en la matière. Le seul bouquin grand public qui permette de savoir ce qu'il faut lire de bien sur les dix dernières années, les romans, c'est le livre de Simeone, *Le spectre de Machiavel*, qui est sorti là aux éditions... je sais plus leur nom, par Vertical... une édition du Rhône-Alpes. C'est une petite maison mais qui a eu le mérite justement de sortir ce livre, parce que justement ce genre d'ouvrage ne trouve par de grand éditeur... et là on a une trentaine d'auteurs récents qui sont passés en revue avec beaucoup d'intelligence. Voilà, ce genre d'ouvrages est rare et difficile à trouver."

(Danièle Perrineau)

"Quand on demande aux gens ce qui connaissent de la littérature italienne... Eco, Buzzati, Baricco... Dante, à la rigueur. Ils connaissent pas Sciascia, Calvino..." (Laure Fougère)

There were many statements similar to Laure Fougère's during the interviews, and most of them contain an implicit recognition of this gap. The French public is not very familiar with Italian literature, and even if there was an increasing curiosity the tools would still be missing. This should be kept in mind, at least as regards the non specialised public, but we can still try to decipher whether a particular French taste can be ascertained from the interviews.

### *A French taste?*

Several features of what we could define as a French taste were found during the interviews. The first dimension that we will evoke relates to style.

*"Bien sûr. Qu'est-ce que c'est, le goût français?"*

Bon, une écriture beaucoup plus travaillée qu'en Italie... ça peut être aussi dans des registres moins littéraires, mais en tout cas une écriture plus travaillée. Alors qu'en Italie, le seul travail dans l'écriture c'est dans le registre bas. Le groupe 63, et ses théories de *l'abbassamento linguistico*. Tout ça vient d'eux, de Arbasino, Tondelli, et après, Rossana Campo... ce goût, et même cette acceptation littéraire d'une écriture basse, c'est-à-dire une écriture où on peut se permettre d'introduire le registre comique des bandes dessinées, etc. Avec en plus le fait qu'en Italie Umberto Eco a théorisé cela avec les écrits post-modernes des années 1980, il a carrément théorisé qu'on peut faire la Divine comédie en BD, c'est possible, mais du coup il n'y a plus de distinction entre différents registres linguistiques, entre différents types de littérature, tout est littérature, à cette manière. Du coup, aujourd'hui, on parle comme de très grands écrivains de jeunes auteurs comme Brizzi qui font un livre qui est très intéressant pour des jeunes de 18 ans, qui est tout à fait sur un *target*, un public jeune, mais qui n'a aucun autre intérêt. C'est un intérêt sociologique, je dirais." (Sandra Di Maggio)

Sandra Di Maggio defines French taste in opposition to an emerging Italian style. More recently, Italian writers have been distancing themselves from the classical standards of style and writing in a way which is close to the spoken word. According this interviewee, this would not happen in France, as the public prefers a more elaborate style. Nevertheless, this opinion could be questioned, especially as there is also a room in France for literature which is written in a less elaborate style (the success of a certain kind of American detective stories, for instance, provides evidence of this). There is a new way of writing which can be described as modern, or contemporary. Indeed, this style is not very French, in the sense that most French contemporary writers use a different one, but this does not mean that the French public does not appreciate it. It is necessary to distinguish between a French literary style and French literary taste. The success of translated (especially Anglo-Saxon) literature in France shows that the French public's expectations are not satisfied by French literature.

However, in the interviews, the idea of a specific French taste was not always related to style. The content of books was also evoked as an important factor.

"Oui, mais moi j'ai pas remarqué une hostilité, une fermeture française par rapport à la littérature italienne. Je pense que, bon, on a beaucoup traduit, et un peu des choses bonnes et moins bonnes, sans vraie distinction sur les genres. Je sais qu'en France, elle a été très appréciée, la jeune, celle de *Dei bambini non si sa niente*... Simona Vinci. Oui, elle avait eu toute un page dans Libé, et j'ai compris pourquoi... Moi j'ai beaucoup aimé le livre, mais je me rapproche plus des goûts français que des goûts italiens! C'est un livre qui a une dureté qu'en Italie on n'aime pas. On aime les cannibales, parce que c'est cinématographique. C'est pas une dureté de fond. La dureté de fond, on n'aime pas, on aime les bons sentiments." (Sandra Di Maggio)

The above piece highlights that the French enjoy to read books that have a certain seriousness.<sup>1</sup> This observation is made by an Italian interviewee, making it appear that an outsider would be more inclined to note these type of characteristics. In fact, this raises the issue of the difficulty of defining the features of a national taste, especially by people from the national culture itself.<sup>2</sup>

"Mais aujourd'hui il y a plusieurs images superposées. Il y a toutes celles-là, mais il y en a d'autres. Par exemple, j'ai lu agréablement dans la presse que les italiens étaient des stylistes, qu'ils n'avaient pas cette littérature intimiste qui est le propre des français... C'est vrai qu'à la fois Céline et Proust ont une littérature sublime, mais affective, aussi bien dans le cas de Céline que de Proust, de façon différente. (...) Ils ont porté quelque chose de typiquement français à un niveau sublime... je sais pas pour quelle raison, on a quelque chose de plus viril en France qu'en Italie qui circule, et là où les français sont le plus mal à l'aise, je crois, c'est dans l'affectivité, on le voit à travers le cinéma français, ou la littérature moyenne française, qui est une littérature affective, larmoyante, il y a une quête de l'affection, finalement... une affection, finalement, que les français ont beaucoup de mal à se donner..." (Paul Matonti)

The follows the theme of the previous piece, with the idea that the French like to read about serious emotions rather than those which are usually present in Italian literature. This also links with the differences highlighted in chapter two and historically rooted between Italian inventiveness and sentimentality on the one hand, and French intellectualism and coldness on the other. These representations still remain at some level, even with regard to the definition of French literary taste. This means that they somehow influence the publishers' idea of what the public expects.

### *Does the French public have predictable expectations?*

The interviewees often mention, in one way or another, that the public has certain expectations. Before going into detail, we can question to what extent the publishers use these expectations (or at least their own representations of what the public thinks) in their decision-making.

"L'idée, donc pour moi c'est littérature contemporaine, et c'est de toutes façons en fonction de ce que je sens de la littérature italienne contemporaine, et de la littérature française, j'essaye de lire le plus possible de romans contemporains français parce que j'ai aussi le souci du lectorat, des goûts du lectorat et de l'éditeur, en même temps je veux pas l'envoyer contre le mur... Cela dit, c'est pas souvent des résultats fabuleux, vous savez que la littérature étrangère... et donc, à partir de là je trouvais qu'un roman avait de l'intérêt dans la mesure où il pouvait correspondre aux attentes du lectorat français, mais en même temps avoir un petit décalage par rapport à ce lectorat, c'est pour ça que je les choisissais." (Henri Jouvenet)

This observation conveys the idea that the publishers do not necessarily follow what they identify as the public's expectations, but they use them as a point of reference and act adapt their decisions accordingly. From our perspective, it is important to keep this in mind, especially as we

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<sup>1</sup> This does not pertain only to literature. We can mention the success of Nanni Moretti's last film (*La stanza del figlio*) in France, which is extremely serious: it was acclaimed by the critics, whereas in Italy it had been one of the most discussed films (one of the recurrent critiques was that the director had abandoned a rather light register and moved to very "serious" and painful matters, and this was presented as very negative).

<sup>2</sup> This is why the travellers' writings have been so important in understanding cultural differences at a historical level.



are dealing with the specialists' perception of what the public might expect, and not of the public itself.

Our first point here will be to consider whether the interviewees think that the public has precise expectations regarding Italian literature specifically.

"Aujourd'hui en plus il y a une telle variété de tons et de genres littéraires que c'est pas suffisamment uniforme, en Italie non plus, pour que les gens aient des attentes précises."  
(Jean Dupasquier)

The variety of Italian literature was often presented as a justification for the fact that the public has no precise expectations. This raises two issues: that of the kind of public we are dealing with, and that of the kind of expectations at stake.

"Et, à côté de ça, vous avez un petit public, de gens passionnés par l'Italie, qui vont plus facilement vers des romans traduits de l'italien. Mais je crois que ces publics s'additionnent, et nous pour vraiment avoir un succès avec un roman traduit de l'italien on peut pas se limiter à ce petit public... Alors, ce petit public de gens passionnés par l'Italie, oui, ils ont des attentes par rapport à ça, un autre regard, oui, ils veulent un regard sur la société italienne qu'ils connaissent bien, Berlusconi, la mafia... bon, il y a des gens qui ont des attentes très ciblées. Les gens qui lisent Camilleri ont des attentes, je crois, par rapport à l'image qu'il leur donne de l'Italie." (Jean Dupasquier)

*"Mais est-ce que vous pensez que le public français a des attentes spécifiques par rapport à ce qu'est la littérature italienne?"*

Je sais pas. Je crois qu'une partie du public a sans doute une image très figée de l'Italie, et donc aime les auteurs qui reproposent cette image-là. Quelque part, De Luca fait ça aussi. Quelque part, dans certains livres. C'est pas par hasard qu'il est très connu pour ses derniers romans..."

(Sandra Di Maggio)

The distinction between the specialised and non-specialised public again becomes relevant, to the extent that only the specialised public, with a certain knowledge as regards Italian literature, can have definite expectations. The fact that the non-specialised public lacks the basic knowledge leads to the creation of a fixed image, as described by Sandra Di Maggio.

If we look at the kind of expectations at stake, we need to distinguish between the expectations pertaining to the image of Italy, which are the ones that we have dealt with so far, and those pertaining to certain authors.

"Mais maintenant je dois dire qu'il y a des écrivains qui s'affirment, c'est-à-dire dont on attend le livre. Quand un livre *Paraît* en France, il y a... vous savez, comme au temps d'Elsa Morante. Quand un nouveau livre d'Elsa Morante *Paraissait* en France, en traduction en français, il y avait un intérêt immédiat. On voulait lire le dernier livre d'Elsa Morante. Ou le dernier livre de Moravia, bien entendu. Et là ça se produit avec des auteurs. C'est-à-dire, ça se produit avec Rosetta Loy. Quand un nouveau livre de Rosetta Loy paraît, il y a un intérêt des libraires, des critiques, des lecteurs. Quand un nouveau livre d'Erri de Luca paraît, c'est la même chose. Et donc, vous voyez, ça c'est assez récent. Où on retrouve... je sais pas, comme par exemple quand un livre de Pavese était traduit, ou un livre de Vittorini, les gens l'achetaient exactement comme un livre de Yourcenar, ou de... vous voyez, il y avait ça. Et là j'ai l'impression que ça se produit. Maintenant... ou chez les essayistes. C'est-à-dire, quand un livre de Claudio Magris paraît, on s'y intéresse, quand un livre de Pietro Citati paraît, on s'y

intéresse. Ou Macchia, Giovanni Macchia. Bon, il est mort maintenant, mais quand il était au fur et à mesure traduit, il y avait toute une classe intellectuelle qui s'y intéressait."  
(Paul Darlignac)

The fact that the public look forwards to an author's books is not necessarily related to the fact that these authors are Italian, however it contributes to the construction of an image of Italian literature in France. In the interviewees' discourse, this ambiguity was often present, and this was clear from the way that they linked the expectations regarding Italian literature to their expectations regarding foreign literature more generally. The most widespread opinion is that the French public has no specific expectations as regards foreign literature.

"De plus en plus, je dirais que le public général n'a plus d'attente particulière par rapport à telle ou telle littérature. C'est pas seulement valable pour l'Italie. Aujourd'hui, plus qu'il y a 20 ans, les gens lisent des romans, et des romans étrangers, pour lire des bons romans. Alors que, peut-être, il y a 20 ans encore, il y avait un souci presque ethnologique, et on voulait connaître un pays par rapport à sa littérature. Et ça je crois que ça a disparu. Ça dis*Paraît*, parce que d'abord les gens ont d'autres moyens de connaître un pays, les voyages, la télé, etc. Mais, je crois qu'il y a deux publics. D'abord, le public un peu général, qu'on arrive à toucher parce qu'on parle d'un roman, d'un auteur, d'un sujet, qui n'a pas a priori de lire un roman italien mais qui se laisse séduire parce qu'on en parle, parce que le sujet l'intéresse, etc." (Jean Dupasquier)

*"D'après vous, qu'est-ce qu'un lecteur français attend d'un livre italien ?*

Je ne sais pas. Je ne crois pas que le lecteur français raisonne en termes de familles littéraires nationales."

(Paul Matonti)

"Ca durera si la littérature est bonne, en tout cas si ça comble une attente, ou les attentes du public... Non, je pense franchement que... tant qu'il y aura des écrivains valables, à mon avis, ou moins valables mais qui trouvent un public, bon, Susanna Tamaro c'est pas un grand écrivain mais elle a trouvé un public." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

These three pieces agree that national expectations are not very relevant. Furthermore, Jean Dupasquier insists on the fact that this is a new development and that there used to be a strong geographical or ethnographic-centred interest in literature.<sup>1</sup> The idea that lies beneath these statements is that today the public's expectations relate to quality, independently of where it comes from.

"Moi je pense que le public de lecteurs cultivés, intelligents, est de plus en plus restreint. Moi je crois, tous les gens qui ont connu, qui ont eu une formation, qui ont été étudiants et lecteurs frénétiques dans les années 1970... ça commence à diminuer dans les années 1980, d'ailleurs... euh... c'est devenu, ça se rétrécit. Il y a une génération qui a beaucoup lu, c'est ma génération. Et la génération qui est venue après n'ont pas le même niveau d'exigence, et surtout n'ont pas la même capacité de lecteur, parce que la sollicitation est beaucoup plus grande. Ils regardent la télé, ils vont au cinéma, il y a une espèce de consommation culturelle

<sup>1</sup> In reality, this type of interest did not only pertain to literature. For instance, it was also very evident in the world of anthropological and ethnographic research. Until the 1980s, most research centres had been created on geographical bases, by areas of interest (research on India, on Asia, on Africa, and so on). From the 1980s, there was a shift and most research centres were dissolved and reorganised on a different ground, on the basis of the topic of research (such as on language, on work, on literature, and so on).

beaucoup plus large que la lecture. Et peut-être ces lecteurs, à qui en tant qu'étudiants on n'a pas appris à lire un livre d'un bout à l'autre, mais à surligner beaucoup, avec la photocopie, qui a aussi... fractionné les livres... Ne sont plus capables, en sciences humaines... n'ont jamais, en quittant la fac, lu un livre d'un bout à l'autre, c'est-à-dire avec la lenteur du développement, du raisonnement... Et je crois qu'avec la littérature c'est la même chose. Regardez le succès des petits bouquins. Tout petits. Ca, même si c'est exigeant, c'est exigeant sur 150 pages!" (Marianne Grange)

Marianne Grange denounces the fact that this exigency of quality only prevails for a certain proportion of the public, that has been educated in a specific way. However, this opinion is not shared by all of the interviewees.

"Et donc, je crois que ça... et puis, il y a une augmentation de l'exigence de qualité, qui est je crois générale. Culturellement parlant, en vrac, on est beaucoup plus exigeants qu'il y a trente ans. Le public aussi. Je dis on, c'est les gens, quoi !" (Danièle Perrineau)

This extract balances Marianne Grange's opinion and brings nuance to this idea of exigency of quality. The last point which should be mentioned is whether this quality differs from what the public expects to find in French literature.

"Je pense qu'aujourd'hui si, contrairement à il y a un certain nombre d'années, il y a un certain intérêt en France pour la littérature étrangère, c'est que la littérature étrangère parle aujourd'hui de choses dont la littérature française ne leur parle pas. C'est-à-dire qu'il y a, par exemple, un retour à la narration pure et simple, qui existe dans la littérature étrangère, et qui existe un peu moins dans la littérature française, qui est beaucoup plus introspective, qui est plus... bon... qui parle beaucoup plus de la sphère privée, et n'oublions pas que le nouveau roman, bien que c'est un peu plus ancien, a quand même détruit un certain nombre de narration classique. Mais il faut pas oublier ça, c'est quand même très important si on porte un jugement sur la littérature française. Donc, je pense qu'aujourd'hui le succès de la littérature étrangère est effectivement parce qu'elle est plus narrative, et que dans cette narration le public français découvre des modes de vie, de culture et d'écriture très différents. Voilà." (Guido Pierucci)

According to this interviewee, there are no expectations of specific foreign literatures but of foreign literature in general: foreign literature is expected to be different from French literature. In a way, this opinion reminds us of the notions of exotic/universal and similar/diverse. In the representations of the expectations of the public that were found during the interviews, there is a constant tension between a certain specificity of Italian literature and the universality of literary taste and expectations. However, the success of Italian authors who belong to the young generation (De Luca, Tamaro, Baricco and Lucarelli) contributes to the construction of the representation of Italian literature as increasingly less rooted in 'italianity', or at least rooted in an Italian social reality in a way which leaves space for universal references (the quality of this literature is not important for this research, even though the interviewees constantly reminded us of the fact that its success is commercial rather than symbolic).

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In this chapter, we have shown that the representations of Italian literature in France have changed over the past two decades; they have followed – and at the same time, preceded – the literary and editorial trends. One of the outcomes of this analysis is that the publication of Italian novels in France is not continuous but cyclical, and that these cycles are generated by the image of Italian literature (when it is viewed as rich and dynamic, or when it provides the hope of publishing a best-seller like the *Name of the Rose*, there are more publications). Conversely and at the same time, the image of Italian literature lives on these cycles and evolves with the success of this literature in France. This reciprocity is characteristic of the fact that literary trends – at least in foreign literature – can only be constructed by the actors in the publishing world of the target country. They are the only people who are able to inscribe these publications in the cultural context of their own country. Apart from the analysis of the trends, it was also found that the romantic image of Italy that was analysed in chapter two is increasingly less present in the representations of Italian literature in France. Evidence for this can be found in the example of the detective novels written by the most recent generation. Italian novels are, increasingly, considered to be the same as any foreign novels, and the focus is on their potential success rather than their 'italianity'. It seems that even in the symbolic pole of the publishing world a change has occurred: the image of Italy has been deteriorated (by a series of factors that have been elucidated in the second part of chapter two), and we have seen from the interviews that the traditional image of Italy is being contaminated by new forms of clichés.

In conclusion, this chapter could be seen as a complement to the previous one, because together they shed light on the two sides of a same process, namely the distancing of the two poles of the publishing world, commercial and symbolic. The growing influence of commercial constraints is accompanied by a progressive dilution of the image of Italy that prevailed until the 1980s and that had strongly contributed to the wave of publication during this period.

## Chapter 7: Trajectories of books and authors

Our research has highlighted the increasing tension between the specificities of the representations of Italy and Italian literature in France that influence the decision-making leading to publications on the one hand, and the increasing commercialisation of the publishing world on the other. In this chapter, the work of five Italian authors will be analysed, and it will be shown how their books came to be published in France. Firstly, we will compare the date of publications of their novels in several countries (Italy, France, the United Kingdom and also the United States, Germany and Spain). Following this, we will find out where France stands on these route. For example, what is the number of Italian books translated into French compared to those translated into German, English or Spanish? Is France of the first countries of publication? We will finally look at the reception of these books in France through the analysis of the reviews of the five authors' books in the press and the interviewees' opinions on the matter.

The authors we have chosen include: Umberto Eco, Antonio Tabucchi, Erri de Luca, Carlo Lucarelli and Andrea Camilleri.<sup>1</sup> Together with Susanna Tamaro, the last three are the most successful authors of the younger generation,<sup>2</sup> in the sense that they are the ones who have sold most copies. We can also note that the five authors we are dealing with were invited to the Paris Book Fair 2002, and all of them were present except Andrea Camilleri (who could not attend for health reasons). For each of them, we will show how they were depicted in the French press, and how this can be related to their genre, their generation, their origins, and also to the role of France in their international career. These analyses illustrate many of the ideas that we have brought into light in the previous sections. Our aim is to understand the extent to which these practical examples fit with the theoretical assumptions raised throughout this thesis.

### 1. UMBERTO ECO: EFFECTS AND ECHO OF *THE NAME OF THE ROSE*

In the previous chapter, we have highlighted an ambiguity in the discourse of the interviewees as regards the impact of Umberto Eco's *Name of the rose*. On the one hand, they almost systematically referred to the growth of publication of Italian novels in the 1980s as a result of the success of the *Name of the Rose*. However, on the other hand, they tended to minimize the importance of this book as such. In this section, we will look at the dates of translation of Eco's books in various

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<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this choice are explained in Annex 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 4 for a description and delimitation of this generation.

countries, in order to understand whether the French "Ecomania" had equivalents elsewhere. We will then analyse the reception of these books in the French media in order to find out some explanations for the success of Umberto Eco.

### 1.1. The translations of Eco's novels into French, English, German and Spanish

Before the 1980s, Eco had published eighteen books, mainly relating to linguistics and semiotics (some of them were collections of essays published elsewhere). Three of them were never translated into French (*Le forme del contenuto*, *La definizione dell'arte* and *Apocalittici ed integrati*). The others were all published in France, but only two out of fifteen were released before 1982, that is to say before the *Name of the Rose*: *L'opera aperta* (published in Italy in 1962) in 1965 and *La struttura assente* (1968) in 1972. The former was published in Germany (1973), in Spain (1979) and in the United Kingdom (1989).<sup>1</sup> These were translations from the second revised edition which was published in Italy in 1967. This edition was, in fact, based on the French version, presented as "revised translation". This book is an aesthetic reflection on a type of art form (such as musical, literary and architectural) that require the interpretation of both the interpreter and the public, as the structure of these art forms are characterized by a certain indetermination, and thus call for some intervention from the public. This book was translated into French by Chantal Roux de Bézieux in cooperation with André Boucourechliev, a composer and musician who is one of the leading figures of contemporary music. During the 1950s, he contributed to the elaboration of the reflection about the "open work" that exploded in the 1960s, mainly as a result of Eco's book. His participation in the French translation explains the role of the French version in the revision of the original book. This is interesting from our perspective as the translation into French was not only the first translation but it also participated in the final elaboration of the book. Eco's second book that was translated into French before 1982 was *La struttura assente*, originally published in 1968, and published in France, Spain and Germany in 1972. Eco's books were not widely translated anywhere before the 1980s, with the exception of Spain, where six of his books were published before 1982. Most of them were also translated into other languages, but this happened later (for instance, *Lector in Fabula*, originally published in 1979, was translated into Spanish in 1981, in French in 1985 and in German in 1987).

It appears that France did not show any particular interest in Umberto Eco's work before the *Name of the Rose*, especially compared to Spain. Nonetheless, the example of *L'opera aperta*

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<sup>1</sup> It is surprising that it was translated into Yugoslavian (1966), Brazilian (1968), Romanian (1968) and Polish (1973) before the Spanish and English translations. This is unusual as most of Eco's books were translated into these languages from the end of the 1980s onwards.

illustrates the existing intellectual links between the two countries. In the case of Eco, this mingling of the French and the Italian versions of the book did not have immediate consequences (this could be partly explained by the fact that the book was a highly specialised essay). However, it also shows how a translation can play a role in the development of a book. We will now look at the various publications of Eco's novels and essays from 1981 on.

Table 7.1. The dates of publication of some of Eco's novels and essays

<i>Original title of the books</i>	<i>Italian</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
<i>Novels</i>					
Il nome della rosa	1981	1982	1983 (USA)	1982	1983
Il pendolo di Foucault	1988	1990	1989 (USA)	1989	1989
L'isola del giorno prima	1994	1996	1995 (USA)	1995	1995
Baudolino	2000	2002	2002 (USA)	2001	2001
<i>Pamphlets</i>					
Diario minimo	1986	1996	1993 (USA)	1993	1993
Secondo diario minimo	1994	1998	1994 (USA)	1994	1994
<i>Essays</i>					
Cinque scritti morali	1997	2000	2001 (USA)	1998	1998
Kant e l'ornitorinco	1997	1999	2000 (USA)	2000	1999

Apart from Eco's four novels, we have also selected some essays and pamphlets.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, we can observe that all of these books have been translated into the four languages in question (this will not be the case for all authors). Secondly, the dates of publication are rather homogenous: for the novels, there is a maximum of two years between the original edition and the publication of the translations. The essays follow the same pattern, with a slightly longer delay (up to four years). Conversely, the publications of the pamphlets are spread over a longer period: the first one was launched in Italy in 1986, and seven years later in Germany, Spain and the USA (and ten years later in France); the second one was immediately translated into German, Spanish and English (the translations were published in 1994, the same time as the original edition), but the French waited four years before publishing it. However, despite these variances, the homogeneity of Eco's international career is striking.

Eco's novels have been translated into a great variety of languages. In total, there were 165 editions of the *Name of the Rose* (including re-publications), and it was translated into thirty languages. There were sixty-one editions of *Foucault's pendulum*, which was translated into twenty languages. Finally, *The Island of the Day Before* was translated into nineteen languages, and there were thirty-nine versions of the book.

<sup>1</sup> They are those for which we had access to the press file.

Table 7.2. Translations of Eco's novels worldwide

Language of translation	<i>Il Nome della Rosa</i> (1981)	<i>Il Pendolo di Foucault</i> (1988)	<i>L'isola del giorno prima</i> (1994)
Albanian	1996		
Arabic	1998		
Bulgarian	1985	1992	1997
Catalan	1985	1989	1995
Croatian	1984*		1997
Czech	1985	1991	1995
Danish	1984	1990	1995
Dutch	1984	1989	1997
English	1983	1989	1995
Estonian	1997	2001	
Finnish	1983	1990	
French	1982	1990	1996
German	1982	1989	1995
Greek	1985	2000	1996
Hebrew	1987		
Hungarian	1988	1996	
Icelandic	1984		
Japanese	1994	1993	
Korean	1986	1990	1996
Latvian	1998		
Lithuanian		1995	1998
Norwegian	1988	1989	
Persian	1987**		
Polish	1988	1993	1995
Portuguese	1984	1990	1995
Romanian	1984		1995
Russian	1993		
Serbian	1984*		1995
Slovenian	1985	1992	1998
Spanish	1983	1989	1995
Swedish	1983		1995
Turkish	1986	1992	

\* Serbo-Croatian translation

\*\* From the English translation

It appears that the *Name of the Rose* has been translated more than Eco's other two novels. In fact, it was the only novel that was translated into Albanian, Arabic, Estonian, Finnish, Hebrew, Icelandic, Latvian and Russian. The *Name of the Rose* and *The Island of the day before*, were translated into Croatian, Serbian, Romanian and Swedish, but not the *Foucault's pendulum*. Conversely, the *Name of the Rose* and the *Foucault's Pendulum* (but not the *Island of the Day before*) were translated into



Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian, Japanese and Turkish.<sup>1</sup> The *Name of the Rose* was translated into thirty-one languages, and from our list above Lithuanian is the only one for which this was not the case.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this table. Firstly, Eco's novels have been translated into a wide variety of languages, including most European languages (in a broad sense), at least for his first novel. In Asia, Eco's books have only been published in Japan and Korea. There is an Arabic, Persian and Hebrew version of the *Name of the rose*, which means that it has even been diffused in the Middle East. The book is available in a wide range of languages and not only in Europe, which is quite exceptional for an Italian novel, as we will see in the following sections.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the *Name of the Rose* is an exceptional case as it enjoyed a more widespread success than Eco's other novels. This success can be seen not only in the number of languages that it was translated into, but also for the number of editions (this total was 165, in comparison to 61 and 39 for the two other novels, respectively).

On average, in each country where these books have been brought out, there were 5,5 versions of the *Name of the Rose*, three of *Foucault's Pendulum* and two versions of the *Island of the Day before*. The fact that a book is re-published is usually a sign of success, either economic, or symbolic, or both. Through the analysis of the reception of the *Name of the Rose* in France, we will try to understand the reasons why this book became a best-seller and the reasons for its incredible success.

## 1.2. The *Name of the Rose*: an inexplicable and unexplained success

The sources for this analysis are newspapers articles and interviews. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to gain access the newspapers archives for the books prior to 1992. After this date, all of the archives have been conserved by the publisher, which made it more accessible. For the previous period, we have hardly any material apart from a couple of articles from *Le Monde* and *Libération* that were obtained directly through their own archive.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> However, we cannot be sure that there no versions of this book have been published after 2001, as the *Index Translationum* only goes up to this point. At the same time, it would not make sense to look at the translations of *Baudolino*, Eco's last novel (released in Italy in 2000), as it is clear that the data would be incomplete.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, another Italian best-seller, *Il gattopardo*, by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, was translated into French, English, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Hungarian, Dutch, Bulgarian, Catalan, Russian, Japanese, Danish, Czech, , Norwegian, Polish, Finnish, Latvian, Estonian, Czech and Serbian. It was also published in Welsh and Ukrainian, unlike any of Eco's novels. However, there are no Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew or Korean translations, unlike the *Name of the Rose*. Overall, the variety of languages into which *Il Gattopardo* has been translated is less than Eco's best-seller.

<sup>3</sup> Attempts were made to access these press files: the translators, the French and the Italian publishers, the Italian cultural institutes in Paris, some newspapers' archives, however, it seems that no one kept track of these press files...

We gained a strong insight into the *Name of the Rose* from the interviews, including: how it was published in France, why it was so successful and the impact that it had on the publications of Italian literature in France. We will now focus this novel, and then analyse it from the perspective of the reception of his others books in France.

**The Story of the *Name of the Rose***  
(based on an interview with one of Eco's French translators)

*Je voudrais que vous me racontiez l'histoire... ou votre histoire, du Nom de la rose.*

Alors, ça, je vais vous la raconter! mais, alors, voilà. Le *Nom de la rose* est un roman qui a été refusé par tous les éditeurs français. Il a été refusé par le Seuil, qui était éditeur de Eco, il avait publié l'œuvre ouverte, dans le sillage de Barthes. Donc, il y avait quand même un lien important entre Eco et la France, qu'il y a toujours eu... et donc, quand le nom de la rose est arrivé au Seuil, on l'a refusé. La réaction a été exactement la même chez Gallimard, où Hector Bianciotti a fait un rapport négatif. La même chez Grasset où Fernandez a fait un rapport négatif, euh... et partout ailleurs aussi, où le livre a été présenté, si bien qu'on savait pas si le livre allait sortir en France. Et moi je vivais en Italie à cette époque. J'ai vécu 10 ans à Naples, et ensuite six ans en tant que directeur de l'institut culturel, et donc je voyais dans les librairies des piles qui partaient du sol. Je n'avais vu en Italie ce phénomène que deux fois. Avec la Storia d'Elsa Morante, qui est sorti tout de suite en poche, Einaudi, et qui se présentait sous forme pyramidale dans les librairies, ça partait du sol. Et puis tout à coup je vois ce livre, avec une belle couverture rose, Bompiani, je l'ai acheté et je l'ai lu. Et, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé en France, il s'est passé qu'un soir Jean-Claude Fasquelle, qui est un très bon éditeur, qui est à la retraite maintenant, euh... s'était endormi et son épouse Nicky, qui est triestine, et qui dirige le *Magazine littéraire*, lisait, en italien naturellement, le *Nom de la rose*. Et puis elle rit dans le lit, je sais pas ce qui se passe, et ça réveille son époux, qui lui demande ce qu'elle lit. Elle dit, je lis le bouquin que vous avez refusé. Et le lendemain, avec son flair habituel et son intelligence des choses, Fasquelle dit, on va le prendre, tant pis, rapport négatif de Fernandez, tant pis, on le prend. Et c'est comme ça que le *Nom de la rose* a été pris chez Grasset. Moi je vivais à Naples. Et bon, comme dans le rapport de chez Grasset, qui était de l'italianiste Fernandez, il était dit que c'était ni du lard ni du cochon, ni un roman ni un essai, qu'il n'y aurait aucun succès... Yves Berger me téléphone à Naples et me dit, avec son côté roublard du sud de la France, me dit [*prend l'accent du sud*], "écoute, c'est un beau roman, il n'y a que toi qui puisse le traduire, on en fera bien 20 000 exemplaires". Et il me promettait le Mont Blanc... et puis, donc, 20 000 exemplaires, pourquoi il me disait ça, parce que enfin de compte il m'offrait très peu par page traduite mais pas mal... et, à cette époque-là, je crois le top, et même au-dessus du top, en pourcentage. Ça voulait dire quoi, ça voulait dire que dans le marasme où se trouvait l'édition italienne en France, on pensait jamais, y compris qui l'avait pris pour le faire traduire, que ça allait être un succès tel qu'il a été. Et c'est pour ça qu'il y a eu... alors, comment j'ai été au courant des différents rapports et tout ça, c'est parce que j'ai travaillé avec Françoise Lérni, y compris quand je suis entré pour fonder une collection italienne chez Flammarion, où elle était, et elle, comme elle est passée de chez Grasset aux éditions Gallimard, et ensuite chez Flammarion, elle m'a raconté de l'intérieur comment les choses s'étaient passées. Voilà. Parce que j'ai pas eu, naturellement, connaissance des rapports de lecture, ça c'est évident, mais elle m'a raconté un peu comment ça s'était passé, voilà.

Bon, au Salon du livre, il en a quand même signé 350 ou 400 en deux heures. J'étais au Salon, il y avait une file qui mordait sur les autres éditeurs. Et Renate, sa femme, qui est d'origine allemande, me disait, tu sais, c'est ce qui arrive à Umberto dans toutes les villes d'Allemagne où on s'arrête. Parce que, il faut pas voir Eco simplement... Puisque vous me faites parler d'Eco, je veux bien en parler. Il faut pas voir Eco simplement comme un auteur lu en France. C'est-à-dire que, il a des tirages à 400 ou 500 000 en Allemagne régulièrement. En France, on est plus capricieux, je comprends pas très bien. Je trouve que *Baudolino* est le livre le plus accessible d'Eco, où on suit le personnage quasiment depuis sa naissance, et tous les chapitres s'intitulent Baudolino fait ci ou ça. Donc on a un fil conducteur, plus simple c'est impossible. Il y a un jeu avec le premier chapitre, mais bon, c'est un jeu du latin macaronique, etc., qui a d'ailleurs été difficile à choisir. Moi j'avais donné une première traduction en français de l'époque, et puis, l'éditeur a préféré que je donne une traduction plus, comment dire, astérixienne, si on veut. Donc, j'ai un peu modifié, et rendu moins *Roman de la rose*, la traduction. Plus *Nom de la rose*.

The *Name of the Rose's* success no longer needs to be demonstrated. The interviewees refer to it as an exceptional case with no equivalent.

"Ecoutez, quand on voit... vous me direz, c'est un succès mondial, mais quand on voit le succès d'Umberto Eco en France, il est quand même... c'est énorme, c'est unique...."  
(Charles Chevallier)

"Mais on peut pas dire qu'aujourd'hui en Italie, le phénomène Eco mis à part, qu'il y a un écrivain qui... on se dit, bon, ça c'est vraiment LE grand écrivain italien." (Guido Pierucci)

Guido Pierucci defines Eco as the most important Italian writer, and it should be questioned whether his books are perceived as typically Italian or whether his success pertains to something more general, which does not necessarily have anything to do with Italy? In a long article published in *Le Monde* (16/04/1982), a professor of Italian literature, who is also translator of many Italian classics, praises the literary and philosophical quality of the book without mentioning any link with Italy. This is symptomatic of the way the *Name of the Rose* was perceived by the interviewees.

"Umberto Eco, pour moi, le succès vient pas du fait qu'il soit italien, sincèrement. Tabucchi, plus, oui, il véhicule une certaine image de l'Italie. Eco, ça aurait pu être n'importe quoi. C'est comme Suskind, c'est pas parce que c'est un auteur allemand. *Le Parfum*, ça aurait pu être... *Le Nom de la Rose*, c'était totalement... Bon, les autres livres, il a plus concentré son travail sur l'Italie, notamment le dernier, *Baudolino*... Mais bon, sincèrement, je crois que les français le lisent pas parce qu'il est Italien, sincèrement, non." (Jean Dupasquier)

"Donc il y a des situations où effectivement un livre explose, mais il ne modifie en rien la situation par rapport à l'Italie, ça ne conduit pas à connaître davantage l'Italie... D'autant plus que le *Nom de la Rose* n'est pas particulièrement italien, comme texte. Il est écrit en italien, mais il ne se passe pas forcément en Italie, enfin, oui, il se passe en Italie, mais pas hasard, ça pourrait être une situation différente". (Claude Muccino)

"Bon, pour les gens comme Eco, c'est un peu pareil, le fait que ce soit italien a pas une grande importance, pour le coup. C'est un roman fabriqué avec un imaginaire européen adapté à l'époque où il a écrit, quoi. C'est-à-dire, bon, pseudo Moyen Age qui en fait... à la fois complètement réel, avec des apparences de lecture historique... mais à la fois qui touchait parce que ce qu'il y avait derrière c'était... à la fois Sherlock Holmes, à la fois Borgès, et à la fois la crise européenne du politique dans les années 1970. Après tout, il aurait pu être écrit directement en anglais ou en français, ça changeait pas grand chose." (Jean-Pierre Romano)

The idea of casualty is clear from the above passages. The *Name of the Rose* could have been written by an Italian, as well as by anyone else, which means that the representations of Italy do not play a major role in the success of the book. The location of the story does not influence the reader in his appreciation of the novel, because it does not remind him (or her) of what is usually expected of an Italian book. In a way, this relates to the fact although Eco is deeply rooted in Italy, he has strong links with other countries and cultures.

"C'est un mondialisé. Si on lui disait ça... je pense que c'est un mondialisé. Il parle 8 langues, il vit entre New York, Paris, Berlin et l'Italie, bon. Je pense que ce qu'il a évoqué dans le *Nom de la rose* c'était aussi quelque chose qui dépassait les strictes limites du moyen âge italien. Mais aussi c'est un polar qui fonctionne drôlement bien. Moi je crois que le secret de son truc c'est que c'est bien ficelé, ça fonctionne." (Myreille Jacob)

The idea of going beyond the limits of the location is interesting because it refers directly to the idea of decontextualisation. In other words, the context (the Italian Middle Ages) is not important for the appreciation of the book, but neither is the intrinsic Italian character of the book (although it is written in Italian by an Italian writer). However, the opposite view was defended in one case.

"Vous trouvez que c'est un livre italien, le *Nom de la rose*?

Oui, il est complètement italien. Il rejoint *Baudolino*, dans un certain sens, parce que... Mais aussi, c'est un livre, *Baudolino*, en particulier, qui est un reflet de ce qui se passe actuellement au Moyen Orient. Regardez, quand vous prenez les communes italiennes, alors, l'étranger arrive, qui est Barberousse. Et que font les communes? Elles jouent l'une contre l'autre pour dominer, grâce à l'étranger, le voisin. Qu'est-ce qui se passe au Moyen Orient, vous avez à peu près la même chose. Vous avez un envahisseur, et les pays... les gouvernements jouent, etc. *Baudolino* est extraordinaire... C'est un roman extraordinaire qui, par contre, n'a pas été reçu à sa juste valeur, qui a eu un demi succès, alors que c'est un roman extraordinaire où l'émotion... il y a trois histoires d'amour, dont une qui est assez érotique, et dans les romans d'Eco il y en a pas tellement pour qu'on puisse les remarquer, et puis vous avez ce déploiement de la croisade. Actuellement, les uns et les autres font des croisades. Les gens devraient le lire quasiment comme un palimpseste à décrypter notre époque, le *Baudolino*. C'est assez ridicule qu'il n'ait pas été compris. Ridicule que Télérama n'ait pas fait une ligne sur *Baudolino*. Que certains journaux l'aient snobés."

(One of Eco's translators)

Eco's translator expresses a very clear opinion on the Italian character of the novel, but then makes an argument regarding Eco's last novel *Baudolino*. In this way, he does not elaborate on his view of the *Name of the Rose*. The end of the paragraph helps to understand that this is related to the bad reception of *Baudolino* by the media and the interviewee justifies his interest in the most

recent book rather than explaining the intrinsic Italian nature of the *Name of the Rose*. However, his opinion remains marginal among the interviewees.

"Je pense que c'est vraiment un phénomène éditorial, et je... je ne suis pas certain que ça ait vraiment à voir avec l'italianité ou la culture italienne. Je n'en suis pas sûr, c'est une hypothèse. C'est un événement tellement mondial, il se situe tellement, bien évidemment, dans la culture italienne." (Jérôme Dupuy)

"En tout cas, que le phénomène du nom de la rose a dépassé tout le monde. C'est un phénomène éditorial pur" (Myreille Jacob)

The idea of an editorial phenomenon summarizes the widespread opinion found in the interviewees' discourse regarding the decontextualisation of the *Name of the Rose*. Implicitly, it means that the book is defined as an editorial product before it can be seen a cultural product. We shall now examine the causes of the success.

"Ce qu'on aime quand on lit un roman, et moi c'est ma façon aussi de juger un roman: un roman doit vous émouvoir et vous apprendre quelque chose. Sinon c'est raté. Donc, il y a cette espèce de recherche entre les deux personnages, et puis le côté on apprend, mais on apprend en s'amusant dans un polar, en essayant de deviner. Et puis, c'est sans doute le fait qu'il y avait un Parallèle à l'origine pour comprendre l'Italie. Eco a balayé... Vous savez, c'était la fin des brigades rouges, et donc vous aviez la ligne officielle qui était le Parti Communiste, et les brigades rouges qui étaient l'hérésie. Et donc, on a fait le Parallèle. C'est une façon, à travers un polar médiéval, de donner à voir notre époque." (Jean-Charles Zilio)

Jean-Charles Zilio emphasizes a didactic aspect of the book, which teaches the reader at many different levels – such as metaphysical and historical. It also has an amusing side as it is a detective novel. It is presented as a chronicle of the 1970s and 1980s in Italy, through the prism of the relations between the Communist party and the *Brigate Rosse* (precisely, the opposition between official line and heresy).

"D'après vous, pourquoi il a eu autant de succès?"

Je crois malheureusement que personne dans la filière de l'édition ne maîtrise ces choses-là. S'ils le savaient, je crois qu'ils... ils ne publieraient que ça.

Il a été best-seller, déjà 8 millions en 1988...

Oui, je crois qu'il y a eu un concours de circonstances. Je crois qu'Eco est très habile, c'est loin d'être un imbécile, c'est quelqu'un de très cultivé, je lui nie pas du tout ces qualités, il a écrit un livre sur Joyce qui est assez intéressant. C'est un sémiologue un peu lourd, mais donc, il avait avant... il avait une forme d'autorité avant de publier ce roman. Il avait une réputation de sémiologue et de critique bien ancrée... il avait un réseau, aussi, d'amis, de professeurs. Il était présent en France, certains de ces articles avaient été publiés dans *Tel Quel*, à travers le Groupe 63 auquel il avait participé, il était en relation avec Sollers... ce qu'était devenu dans les années 1970 l'establishment littéraire français... et ça a dû jouer, sa réputation de sémiologue ça a dû jouer. Mais c'est un phénomène qui est trop complexe pour moi, c'est un sujet pour vous ! Son succès en Italie a dû jouer aussi, le fait qu'il ait vendu... je crois que quand il a été traduit en France il en était à 800 000 exemplaires en Italie, ça a dû jouer... Pourquoi ne pas prendre ce petit risque financier d'une centaine de milliers de francs, traduction et fabrication comprises, pour un profit qui pourrait être démesuré. Si j'avais été à la tête d'une maison d'édition, j'aurais peut-être raisonné en ces termes, aussi."

(Paul Matonti)

Paul Matonti focuses on Eco's intellectual reputation before the publication of the *Name of the Rose*. He was already known in France, where he had received praise for his essays, and had strong personal connections in the country. In this way, the role of networks is brought into light. However, in this case, it is not enough to explain the success of the book. Another factor was its success in Italy, that had been outstanding. Although Paul Matonti does not appreciate Eco's work, he tries to think objectively about the reasons for its big success. In doing so, he refers to the notion of editorial risk, which may have been influenced by its success in its country of origin. This contradicts the background to the publication of the book, which had been refused by many publishers at the beginning,<sup>1</sup> and thus contributes to the constitution of a myth around the *Name of the Rose*: no one can understand the success. It could be argued that no one can understand its success, and no explanation seems to be completely plausible.

"Bon, vous savez, moi qui suis éditeur, et qui suis écrivain, et qui m'occupe d'édition depuis très longtemps, je peux vous dire que personne peut vous dire pourquoi un livre a du succès. Pourquoi il a eu du succès en Amérique? Eco s'amusait, il disait qu'il y a jamais eu de Moyen Age en Amérique. Je sais pas. Bon, on avait besoin, au moins pour l'Occident, de... je crois qu'il y a deux côtés. C'est peut-être le premier polar médiéval." (Paul Darlignac)

"Et puis il y a d'autres phénomènes, ça c'est des phénomènes qui sont un peu à mi-chemin entre la littérature et autre chose, c'est par exemple Umberto Eco. Là aussi... c'est vrai qu'il y a des personnages qui font que la culture italienne est toujours présente." (Jacques Laplace)

Both of these statements strengthen the idea of a myth, on a phenomenon which cannot be explained. However, they also go further by claiming that the success of the *Name of the Rose* could very well be related to its genre. In the article in *Le Monde* (16/04/1982) mentioned above, the novel is presented as a unique genre. It was the first "*polar médiéval*", but also one of the first Italian books to combine literature with philosophy, metaphysics, spirituality and theology.<sup>2</sup>

None of these explanations seem to be very convincing, however, they should not be dismissed either. This ultimately means that the *Name of the Rose* phenomenon is extremely complex and difficult to analyse. The main conclusion that can be drawn is this idea of the uniqueness of the book on the French (and international) editorial scene. The fact that this book was so successful, and that there was no obvious explanation for this success, led to the construction of a mythical

<sup>1</sup> This is similar to Claude Muccino's reaction evoked above.

<sup>2</sup> One of Eco's translators said: "Mais vous savez, par exemple, je donne la traduction d'un livre culte en Italie, le *Monde sauvé par les gamins* d'Elsa Morante, qui est un livre culte, et un très beau livre, mais qui mélange le théâtre, la prose, la poésie... C'est un livre extraordinaire. Je le fais sortir ici, ça nécessite... parce que, il y a des pages qu'on lit en tournant le livre, donc il faut de la gymnastique. Il a été, par exemple assassiné par un italianiste tel que Fernandez dans le *Nouvel Observateur*, en y disant que c'était ni du lard ni du cochon, un peu comme pour le *Nom de la Rose*, etc. Naturellement, c'est ni de la poésie ni de la prose. Vous parliez d'étiquette, ici on est le pays des étiquettes. Si c'est pas du bordeaux c'est du bourgogne, si c'est pas... et pour les gens aussi. Il est très difficile de passer dans le même livre à tous les genres." This would imply that France is not very receptive to mixed genre novels, which would be paradoxical with regards to *Le Nom de la Rose*. This strengthens the idea that there is no unique explanation for its success, and that there was a progressive construction of its consecration as a myth.

story. Every interviewee had something to say about Eco's success. Those who liked his work praised its richness and its newness. Even those who did not like it admitted its richness and its newness. Overall, we can assume that these opinions testify to the 'consecration' of the book, that also occurred through the development of the curiosity surrounding it. The main consensus related to the difficulty in explaining the success, which necessarily gave rise to further interest.<sup>1</sup>

We mentioned that there was no consensus on the intrinsic quality of the *Name of the Rose*. Some interviewees even question the reach of the book, or at least the uniqueness of the phenomenon.

"Je ne crois pas que Eco a changé quoi que ce soit dans l'édition, c'est qu'effectivement à un moment donné le *Nom de la Rose* a eu ce succès qui a dépassé d'ailleurs les mentalités, les usages, les coutumes, les mœurs... mais ce n'était pas isolé, il y avait eu le *Guépard*, peut-être que la *Storia*, d'Elsa Morante, a fait la même chose..." (Claude Muccino)

Claude Muccino insists on the fact that Eco's success is not a unique phenomenon. However, we can question the relevance of the comparison with *Il Gattopardo*, as for many reasons (for example, this book was published in Italy in 1958 and in France in 1959 and at that time, the rate of publication of Italian literature was slower than in the 1980s) this book did not have the same impact as the *Name of the Rose*, insofar as there was no trend which coincided with its publication.

"Eco a certainement eu un rôle mais... quand a-t-il été traduit, le *Nom de la rose*? Oui, 1982, après avoir été refusé par de nombreuses maisons d'édition. Il a fait le tour de toutes les grandes maisons avant d'atterrir chez Grasset. Il est passé par Julliard, le Seuil, Gallimard, il a été refusé... Bon, je considère pas Umberto Eco comme un grand écrivain. C'est un écrivain populaire, habile, je trouve que le *Nom de la rose* est un très mauvais roman, qui ne laissera pas de traces dans la littérature, sinon comme phénomène sociologique, il intéressera les sociologues de la littérature." (Paul Matonti)

"Non, bien sûr, les critiques ne sont pas toujours unanimes. Même en Italie il y a un jeu, c'est le jeu du massacre avec Eco. Quoique, il est en train de récupérer un peu... mais en France aussi, il y a toute une frange de l'intelligentsia qui considère qu'un intellectuel qui a tant de succès c'est pas sérieux; voilà... oui, mais, c'est vrai que c'est un intellectuel un peu starisé, quoi..." (Myreille Jacob)

In the above passages, Paul Matonti questions the literary quality of the novel, whilst Myreille Jacob emphasizes that there seems to be a great willingness to criticize Eco at any cost, because he does not fit with the usual definition of the intellectual. In other words, real intellectuals are not supposed to be very successful, otherwise they lose their credibility. This attitude was clear in several interviews and some of the people seemed perplexed by the phenomenon. We could interpret this as a reaction to something that they cannot explain. Most of the interviewees are part of the publishing world (either directly or indirectly), and in the case of Eco, they are faced with a phenomenon that is not a usual case of best-seller, that they cannot explain with the "usual

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<sup>1</sup> As an illustration, we can mention that in *Le Monde's* critique of the 16th April 1982, the book is presented as a best-seller, and focuses on the "phenomenal" aspect. It had just been published in France, and this was certainly one of the reasons why people bought it.

tools" (literary quality, easiness of the reading and so on). Some of them try to minimize the impact of the *Name of the Rose*, which is a way of putting an end to this incomprehension. Nevertheless, there are editorial consequences from this phenomenon, as we saw in the previous chapter.

The success of the *Name of the Rose* led to the publication of many other Italian authors, as we have already seen, but none of them enjoyed commercial success. This is interpreted by Jean-Charles Zilio as a quest for another best-seller, as if there ought to be another unique novels waiting to be discovered. We have seen that Eco's subsequent books were all translated into French, and we now want to understand whether they were successful or not, and what this success (if any) was based on.

### 1.3. Eco's books in the 1990s: a dissipation of the *Name of the Rose* effect?

Eco's French publishers have the newspaper articles relating to most of his books published after 1992. This means that reviews were available for *L'île du jour d'avant* (his third novel), *Comment voyager avec un saumon* (a humoristic collection of chronicles), and four essays (*Six promenades dans le bois du roman et d'ailleurs*, *Kant et l'ormythorinque*, *Cinq questions de morale*, *Art et beauté dans l'esthétique médiévale*). Unfortunately, they had not kept the record for *Le Pendule de Foucault*, and had they not yet prepared yet the file for *Baudolino* (published in France in 2002 at the time of the book fair). For the former, the same work was done as with the *Nom de la Rose*, however, only one article in *Le Monde* was found. For the latter, articles were collected as they were published, which occurred mostly during the book fair.

On the 14th October 1988, *Le Monde* printed an article that had been originally published in *L'Espresso*, an Italian weekly magazine, written by Jacques Le Goff and translated into Italian by Umberto Eco himself. *Foucault's Pendulum* had recently been published in Italy and had already sold 100,000 copies. The title on the front page of *L'Espresso* was "*Ecofenomeno*", and throughout his article Le Goff refers to this *livre-événement*, which is described as outstanding, from a literary and metaphysical point of view. The book is described as a chronicle of Italy during the war and the post-war period (from Fascism to the *Brigate Rosse*), even though the action mostly takes place in Paris. This book was a real editorial event in Italy, and the fact that *Le Monde* published this article more than a year before its publication in France (planned for the beginning of 1990) paved the way for a similar reception. However, in the reviews of the following books, there are many references to the *Pendulum* and although the critiques are largely positive, they do not go as far as Le Goff, as the book is not deemed to be of the same calibre of the *Name of the Rose*. The



question of the genre (in a broad sense) remains undefined. In March 1996, the *Pendulum* is defined as a "*thriller philo-ésotero-historico-intello*" in *Lire*. Most articles mention its richness, the use of several disciplines (such as philosophy, theology and history) – and its complexity. The perception of the book is quite similar to that of the *Name of the Rose*, however there is no surprise effect. In this sense, the second novel is a less extraordinary event.

On the occasion of the launch of Eco's third novel *L'île du jour d'avant* in France, forty-five articles were published in a wide range of newspapers. This author, who no longer needs to be introduced to the French public, is presented as the "*Pavarotti de l'écriture*" (*L'Événement du Jeudi*, 22/02/1996), and someone between Blaise Pascal and Alexandre Dumas (*Les Echos* 11/03/1996). The reviewers insist on the existence of the author's uniqueness and even speak about an "Eco-system" (*Le Parisien*, 24-25/02/1996), which is exemplified in Eco's personal and innovative style of narrative construction. In this respect, this novel is a continuity of the other two. In fact, if sixteen out of the forty-five of the articles have a very eulogistic style and use unusual words to describe the novel: "*étourdissant, emportant, inventif, captivant, éblouissant, vertigineux, inoubliable, ambitieux*". They contain the notion of originality, with also an emphasis on the instructive aspects of the book. This testifies to the peculiarity of Eco's work in the representations: his books are not commented upon with the same words used to describe other authors ("interesting, well written, well constructed"). However, there were also negative critiques of the book: seven of the forty-five articles clearly disliked it because it is too complex, sophisticated and boring. For example, "*La fiction sophistiquée d'Eco ne distille qu'un ennui pesant*" (*La liberté*, 14/04/1996) ; in *L'Actualité* (August 1996), the book is described as extremely narcissist and unbearable. The title, "*J'abandonne!*", expresses the author's failure to appreciate the Eco-system. The underlying idea is that *L'île du jour d'avant* is not a novel in the classical sense of the term, and that this denaturising of the genre does not work. This opinion is summarized in the title of the review in *Valeurs actuelles* (02/03/1996): "*Eco est au roman ce que le Canada-dry est à l'alcool*". In this case, we are again faced with the question of genre and the acceptance – or not – by the critics as Eco takes the liberty of going beyond the traditional limits of the novel (in terms of context, style, content). This is the peculiarity of his novels, and probably one of the reasons for their success. However, we need to moderate the success of this third novel, as most of the reviewers were very critical of its complexity and its non-accessibility to a large public. A distinction can be made with the *Name of the Rose*, as at the time the complexity was part of its inventiveness, and it was not judged as pretentious or ambitious. With the second, and even more with the third novel, the reviews became more critical of his approach. "*En Italie, chaque nouvel ouvrage de l'auteur-philosophe du Nom de la rose est accueilli comme un événement national. Lorsque L'île est sortie en novembre*

dernier, le roman fut l'objet d'annonces respectueuses en première page de tous les journaux italiens - et la cible de boulets rouges dans la plupart des chroniques en pages intérieures. Avec une malveillance mal dissimulée, la majorité des critiques a défini la trajectoire créatrice d'Eco comme une chute continue, débutant avec la renommée mondiale de la Rose, se poursuivant avec la médiocrité du Pendule de Foucault et aboutissant au désastre artistique de L'île." (Scott Sullivan, *Lire*, Février 1995). According to this quotation, it seems that this progressive scepticism was also quite strong in Italy. Furthermore, it continued with Eco's fourth novel *Bandolino*, which was released at the occasion of the Paris 2002 book fair.

Eco's other books were actually received in the same way. *Comment voyager avec un saumon* was reviewed in than 45 articles, and was mentioned in 30 classifications of the top-selling essays. Most reviews describe it as funny, ironic and well written. The fact that it is an essay rather than a novel is positive for the authors as there are no expectations in terms of genre. The translator of the book explains the causes of the success:

"Moi ce que j'ai fait de lui et qui a été vraiment un best, on en a vendu 150 000 exemplaires, c'est pas mal, c'est la traduction de ce qui en italien s'appelait *Secondo diario minimo*... c'est Comment voyager avec un saumon. Et là, effectivement, ça a fonctionné aussi. Ça a fonctionné parce que je suis allée jusqu'au bout, j'ai fait plus qu'une traduction, une adaptation. En même temps, c'est à la fois italien et en même temps ça dépasse de loin les strictes limites de l'italianité. C'est pour ça aussi que ça a fonctionné. C'est très européen, par exemple les saynètes sur le portable, c'est à la fois européen et américain, et je pense que ça a marché parce que... c'était drôle, mais c'était pas des private jokes d'italien à italien."

Here again, the theme of universality and the absence of a rooted context is present in the analysis. In fact, when dealing with essays, it is even more striking than with a novel, to the extent that they are commentaries on everyday life. However, the critiques are not unanimous, and a few reviewers regret that the author often continues to repeat the same point ("*Une Eco-logie à bout de souffle*" is the title of the article in *Le Figaro littéraire* 02/04/1996).

The other four essays that are analysed are more specialised, and therefore they were the subject of less newspapers reviews. They were all reviewed eleven times, in the usual general daily and weekly papers (*Le Monde*, *L'Événement du Jeudi*) and a couple of more specialised ones (*Lire*, *La Quinzaine littéraire*). *Art et beauté dans l'esthétique médiévale* is an exception, as it only had four reviews, three in the main daily newspapers, one in *Critique d'art*, which testifies for its very specialised genre. Overall, these books were presented as interesting, erudite, cultured, sometimes brilliant or intellectual and often difficult. It seems, however, that these books were reviewed because they were written by a best-selling author (who had written, among other things, two well publicised novels).

From our perspective, there are several interesting aspects in the analysis of the reception of Eco's novels in France. Firstly, the *Name of the Rose* has had a very peculiar role in the author's international career. It was a best-seller, and the main reason for its success was its genre, which was unique and innovative. Another peculiarity of this book was that the critics were not unanimous, and many were sceptical to the fact that an academic could produce a best-seller, even though he had never written a novel before. This tension led to the constitution of the 'Eco-myth', which was based, on the one hand, on the incredible success of his book(s) and, on the other, on the difficulty of explaining this success. We can also mention that this success was conveyed by Jean-Jacques Annaud's adaptation of the book into a film which was released in 1986 and viewed by a large public. Secondly, it should be remembered that the reception of Eco's novels in the media has become increasingly less enthusiastic, which could be linked to the fact that the intrinsic innovation of the first one was a surprise in the editorial world, and this effect was dissipated with his subsequent novels. Finally, the importance of the author's image should be emphasized as Eco does not fit in any traditional category. He does not really belong to the literary world (in the sense of symbolic literature) as he is an academic and also an intellectual, however, there are many types of intellectuals. On 18th July 1982, *Le Monde* published an interview with Eco, with the title "*Umberto Eco, l'intellectuel dans le night-club*". It was a discussion on the role of intellectuals and the nature of cultural consumption. In some respects, it appeared to argue that anyone can write a best-seller. In *Le Monde* of 16th April 1982, he wrote a short article called "*Comment j'ai écrit mon livre*", which provided a justification for writing a historical novel in a context where it was no longer fashionable. This conveys the distinction between the literary and the intellectual world. Eco was not only the inventor of a mixed genre, he was also a symbol of the overlap between the intellectual, academic, literary and publishing worlds, to the extent that he does not stick to the standards of any pre-defined world, but creates his own rules. Even though he is not perceived in France as representative of Italian literature (but who could be a representative of Italian literature?), however, the way in which he was received reminds us of the historical representations of Italy and the Italians in France, which are linked to inventiveness. In other words, Eco's case is an incarnation of the ambiguity which characterises the representations of Italy in France, which lie between fascination and contempt.

## 2. ANTONIO TABUCCHI: FROM LITERATURE TO POLITICS

### 2.1. The translation of Tabucchi's novels into French, English, German and Spanish

Antonio Tabucchi belongs to the 'relieving troop',<sup>1</sup> the generation who broke through in the 1980s following the international success of the *Name of the Rose*. Since then, most of his books have been translated into many languages: according to the UNESCO's *Index translationum*, 207 translations were published in total worldwide (this includes the re-editions). Among them, thirty seven were translated into French, thirty-eight into German, eleven into English and twenty-eight into Spanish, which means that these four languages represent more than half of the publications (114).

Table 7.3. Dates of publication of Tabucchi's novels in several languages

Original title of the book	Italian	French	English <sup>2</sup>	German	Spanish
Piazza d'Italia	1975	1994		2000	1998
Il piccolo naviglio	1978	1999			
Il gioco del rovescio	1981	1988	1986	1986	1986
Donna di Porto Pim	1983	1987	1991	1993	1987
Notturmo Indiano	1984	1987	1988	1990	1988
Piccoli equivoci senza importanza	1985	1987	1988	1986	1987
Il filo dell'orizzonte	1986	1988	1990	1988	1987
I volatili del Beato Angelico	1987	1989	1991	1991	1991
I dialoghi mancati	1988	1988			
Un baule pieno di gente	1990	1992		1992	1997
L'angelo nero	1991	1992		1996	1993
Sogni di sogni	1992	1994	1999	1998	1996
Requiem: un'allucinazione	1992	1993	1994	1994	1994
Gli ultimi tre giorni di Pessoa	1994	1994		1995	1999
Sostiene Pereira	1994	1995	1995	1999	1995
La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro	1997	1997	1999	1998	1997
Si sta facendo sempre più tardi	2001	2002		2002	2002

Tabucchi's first novel *Piazza d'Italia* was published in Italy in 1975, but none of his books were translated before 1986. *Il gioco del Rovescio* (1981 in Italy) was published simultaneously in Spain, Germany and the United States, together with *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza* in Germany. During the two following years, twelve translations (of six novels in total) were brought out: one

<sup>1</sup> See chapter four.

<sup>2</sup> All these books were published in the United States (New York) by the same publishing house, New Directions Publishing incorporation.

in German, two in English, four in Spanish and four in French. This means that in three years the rise in the number of the translations of Tabucchi's novels was more or less homogenous in the four countries we are looking at. Between 1989 and 1992, eleven translations (of six books) were published, one in Spain, three in Germany, three in the United States and five in France. Altogether, nine of Tabucchi's novels were translated between 1986 and 1992, all of which had been published in Italy between 1981 and 1991. Although France was the last country in which any of them were published (a year after the others), French is the only language into which all eleven novels were translated during this period, (only six were translated into the three other languages). Some of the novels were later on translated into German (one in 1996) and into Spanish (one in 1993 and one in 1997). Between 1993 and 1996, five of Tabucchi's novels were published in French, two in English, three in German and six in Spanish. Between 1997 and 2002, there were three in French, two in English, five in German and three in Spanish.

In total, out of the seventeen novels published in Italy between 1975 and 2001, all of them were translated into French, fifteen into Spanish and German, and ten into English. Overall, Tabucchi can be considered to be a rather successful author. According to his French publisher, between 20,000 and 30,000 copies of his books are sold on average in France, between 50,000 and 60,000 in Spain, and about the same in Germany and Portugal. Apart from two books that were translated only into French (*I dialoghi mancanti* and *Il piccolo naviglio*), the author's career in France, Germany and Spain has followed a rather similar path. We can note that the books are often published in France first (eleven times out of fifteen, and the four other times regarded the author's most ancient books). Between Germany and Spain, the situation is slightly unbalanced as in eight cases the books were first published in Spanish, in three cases first in Germany, and in four cases at the same time, which means that the Spanish versions of the books tend to be published earlier than their German counterparts.<sup>1</sup> As far as English is concerned, the publication of ten out of seventeen books is rather impressive, especially as we have seen that the number of translations into English is always much lower than the other languages in question. Tabucchi's American publisher, New Directions, has a very prestigious catalogue in symbolic terms, especially regarding non-Anglo-Saxon literature, with authors such as Baudelaire, Borgès, Céline, Goethe, Hesse, Kafka, Mishima, Montale, Neruda and Rilke. In a sense, this rather homogeneous international success reflects the international life of the author himself:

"Vous savez, il parle parfaitement français. Il a acheté un appartement à Paris, il vit beaucoup au Portugal, à Lisbonne et aussi à Paris. Il se partage... c'est compliqué sa vie, il se partage entre Florence, Pise, il enseigne à Sienne, un village près de Pise où il habite... mais il vient

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<sup>1</sup> We can assume that the author's link to Portugal is at the basis of the high interest of the Spaniards for his work, probably more than for the Germans.

beaucoup à Paris, il y a fait des conférences, et aussi à Lisbonne, et ailleurs. Mais Antonio est très connu du public français..." (Charles Chevallier)

Tabucchi is not exclusively tied to Italy and he has strong ties with a variety of cultures. In fact, some interviewees even query whether his novels are specifically 'Italian'.

"Est-ce qu'Antonio Tabucchi c'est de la littérature italienne? C'est sans doute de la littérature, mais je crois que ça a beaucoup plus à voir avec le Portugal qu'avec l'Italie. Il est italien, mais son œuvre n'a rien à voir avec l'Italie, au point de vue écriture, tradition, références. Rien."  
(Guido Pierucci)

This leads us to wonder whether Tabucchi's novels are received by the French media as specifically or typically Italian or if they emphasize his attachment to several places (and especially his link to Portugal, as he is the world specialist of Pessoa); more generally, we want to understand how he is presented by the French critiques.

## 2.2. The reviews of Tabucchi's novels: towards a political approach?

This section is based on the collection of newspapers articles relating to Tabucchi's novels which had been collected by his French publisher. In total, fourteen titles files were available<sup>1</sup> for the books published between 1987 and 2002. On average, there were less than thirteen articles found on each book, with variations from seven to thirty-one. Most of the articles are from the daily newspapers *Le Monde*, *Libération* and *Le Figaro*, the weekly papers *L'Express*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *L'Événement du Jeudi* and the specialized papers *Lire*, *La Quinzaine littéraire* and *Le Magazine littéraire*.

The first three French translations of Antonio Tabucchi's books – *Femmes de Porto Pim*, *Nocturne indien* and *Petits malentendus sans importance* – were published simultaneously, and the authors was then presented as the idol ("coqueluche") of a new generation, a new wave, even as a "real movement" of the 1980s (*Libération*, 06/07/1987). He is associated with writers such as Aldo Busi and Daniele Del Giudice, who also belong to the same generation and were translated into French more or less at the same time. In 1988 and 1989, three more novels were published – *Le jeu de l'envers*, *Le fil de l'horizon* and *Les oiseaux de Fra Angelico* -, and the critiques continue to praise Tabucchi as "l'une des figures de proue de la nouvelle génération italienne" (*Bulletin critique du livre*, October 1989) or the "Enzo Ferrari des lettres italiennes" (*L'Événement du Jeudi*, 09/06/1989). A significant part of the articles were written either by translators or publishers of Italian literature (including a few of our interviewees), that is to say by Italian specialists in France. Overall, Tabucchi is presented as a very talented author who belongs to a new Italian generation;

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<sup>1</sup> We can suppose that there were reviews for the other 3, but they were published by other publishers, which explains why the main one had not kept track of them.

however, there are no direct references to Italy as such, nor to Italian authors of previous generations. The existence and the literary interest of this new generation is never questioned, and it seems as though these references have been brought in as evidence.. For instance, a professor of Italian literature evokes "*une nouvelle vague d'écrivains italiens qui font tout pour oublier qu'ils sont italiens*" (*L'Express*, 10/07/1987), as if the Italian character of these young writers was in essence different from what the 'italianists' usually perceived as 'italianity'. This means that there is a change in the representations of Italian literature, as though the usual points of reference could not be taken for granted any longer. This can also be partially explained by Tabucchi's links with Portugal, which is often emphasized in the press articles. In this sense, it appears that he is less rooted in Italy.

From 1992 onwards, a further eight translations of Tabucchi's novels were reviewed. It is clear that he is becoming increasingly well-known by the French public and media, and greatly appreciated by both. For instance, when *Pereria prétend* was released in 1995, the title of the one-page *Libération* article (20/04/1995) was "*Nocturne portugais*", which was a reference to the author's *Nocturne indien*. The author of the article assumed that the readers knew about his previous novel, which had been published in France eight years earlier. In addition, three changes can be noted in the way his books are presented. Firstly, there is an increasing focus on the political commitment of the authors, starting with *Pereira pretend* in 1995, which was reviewed thirty-one times. There are many articles in political publications, such as *Lutte ouvrière* (28/07/1995, 09/08/1996 and 11/07/1997), *Le Canard enchaîné* (31/07/1995), *Politis* (20/04/1995) or *Esprit* (July 1995). In fact, Silvio Berlusconi won the election of 1994, and in the reviews, there are were references to the new government and the fact that Tabucchi clearly stands in opposition to the ongoing events in Italy.<sup>1</sup> Overall, the critiques of this book are more political than literary. This was even continued two years later when *La tête perdue de Damasceno Monteiro* was published (for instance, there was a review in *Le Monde diplomatique* in 1997), and also when *Il se fait tard, de plus en plus tard* was published for the Paris Book Fair in 2002.<sup>2</sup> This focus can partly be explained by the fact that Tabucchi's latest novels are more committed than the first ones, but also – mostly – by the reference (implicit or explicit) to the political situation in Italy. The election of 1994 not only signalled the end of a long Christian-democratic era, but also they have constituted a surprise throughout Europe, to the extent that Berlusconi had been previously known as a business man and the owner of Italian television channels and football teams, among other enterprises. In a context of the fight against Mafia and corruption, the personal commitment of a certain number

<sup>1</sup> *Sostiene Pereira* tells the story of a Portuguese journalist in 1939 who realizes the necessity of fighting against fascism.

<sup>2</sup> Tabucchi took part in the protest movement of several Italian writers who had threatened not to come to the fair because they were represented by their government (see Chapter 3).

of Italian writers was perceived abroad as a sign of the resistance of the Italian people. The second general trend was the increasingly broad spectrum of the newspapers and magazines in which the reviews were published. We have mentioned several political papers, but there are also many articles in the daily regional newspapers. We also note the publications of reviews in women's magazines such as *Elle* and *Femme*, or in "celebrity" papers such as *Gala*. We should also mention some economic magazines such as *Le nouvel économiste* and *Les échos*, and more cultural ones such as *Les inrockuptibles* and *Rockland*. This is a clear sign of the "democratisation" of Tabucchi's novels: the enlargement of the type of newspapers corresponds to an enlargement of the types of readers. We can interpret this as a move from a rather specialised public (with a specific interest in Italian literature) to a broad public who evaluates and chooses the writers on different grounds. This leads us to the third trend, which relates to the representations of Italy and Italian literature implicit in the reviews. In the 1990s, references ceased to be made to the new generation of writers in which Tabucchi belongs, and few references were made to Italian literature in general. He is often presented as one of the most important Italian writers, however he is not restricted to a particular trend, movement or generation. Whether his style is particularly Italian or not is no longer an issue: "*C'est assez, l'Italie est dite*" was the sub-title for a review of *Piazza d'Italia* (*Construire*, 20/04/1994), as if the novel could contain all of the characteristics which are perceived to symbolise Italy (in fact, it is one of Tabucchi's most Italian books). This is paradoxical because Tabucchi is definitely not the most 'typical' Italian writer: most of his novels take place elsewhere, and his frame of references (literary, social, even political) are more Portuguese than Italian.<sup>1</sup> However, his political beliefs are rooted in the Italian context. In this way, the representations of Italy, somehow, are reduced to this political context, which means that the focus is on the most stereotypical features, such as corruption and the carefree nature of the people.

Finally, it is important to note that firstly the emphasis on the literary quality of the novels was less and less present from 1992 onwards, and secondly that the reviewers less frequently specialists of Italian literature than in the 1980s. The nature of the critique has become increasingly political, and less literary. This is another sign of an overall evolution that we can describe as a progressive dilution of the 1980s representations of Italian literature. Tabucchi's novels are reviewed from the perspective of the political context in Italy, but no longer in terms of the literary context, as seen with the emergence of a new generation of writers. There is now a focus on the themes evoked in his books which are appropriated by the reviewers to the

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<sup>1</sup> See the extract from the interview with Guido Pierucci quoted above.



detriment of the analysis of the books in the Italian literary context.<sup>1</sup> This can be interpreted as a de-literarisation to the benefit of a certain commercial logic. Consequently, Tabucchi's novels are praised because the message they contain is likely to satisfy the public's "political" expectations, not because they fit into the general framework of representations of Italian literature that prevailed in the 1980s.

### 3. ERRI DE LUCA: AN AMBIGUOUS LITERARY SUCCESS

#### 3.1. The translations of De Luca's novels into French, English, German and Spanish

*Table 7.4. Dates of publication of De Luca's novels in several languages*

<i>Original title of the book</i>	<i>Italian</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
Non ora, non qui	1989	1992		2000	2000
Una nuvola come tappeto	1991	1994			
Aceto, Arcobaleno	1992	1994		1999	2000
I colpi dei sensi	1993	1996		1999	
In alto a sinistra	1994				
Pianoterra	1995	1996			
Ora prima	1997	2000			
Alzaia	1997	1998		2000	
L'urgenza della libertà	1999				
Tu, mio	1998	1996	1999 (USA)	2000	2000
Tre cavalli	2000	2000		2001	2001
Montedidio	2002	2002	2002 (USA)	2002	2002

The most striking fact is that there are clear discrepancies between the different in which his books were translated. Out of the twelve novels, ten have been published in French, seven in German, five in Spanish and only two in English. Furthermore, we can note that they were not translated into German, Spanish or English before 1999. The discovery in these countries occurred much later than in France, where De Luca's first novel was launched in 1992, three years after the original edition. In France, the publications more or less followed the pattern of the Italian ones, whereas all of his works were published in Germany, Spain and America after 1999. However, there seems to have been an acceleration, at least in Germany and in Spain, insofar as De Luca's last three novels have now all been translated and published. The American publications give us indications about the most popular and successful books: *Tu, mio* and *Montedidio* seem to have managed to catch the attention of the American publishing world.

<sup>1</sup> We can wonder whether this could be an effect of the fact that lower-qualities papers also wrote about Tabucchi.

Finally, we can note that his first novel, *Non ora, non qui*, was published both in Germany and in Spain in 2000, eleven years after the original edition, which is also an indicator of an increasing interest in his work.

### 3.2. The reception of De Luca in France

Apart from his first book, De Luca has been edited by the same publisher between 1992 and 2000 (9 books in total). He then changed and his work is now edited by one of the most important publishers in terms of symbolic capital. This testifies to a certain critical success, if not a commercial one. The publisher who launched his first book explained during the interview that it had sold only 3,000 copies in ten years, however they printed new copies in 2002 and again in 2003, and the sales have increased significantly. In fact, on the occasion of the Paris Book Fair of 2002, De Luca was interviewed on national television on channel TF1, and there were many articles in the daily newspapers. According to this publisher, this contributed his ability to gain a larger audience. His current publisher mentioned that they had sold at least 30,000 copies of *Trois Chevaux*, which he regarded as an appropriate level of sales for a foreign book.<sup>1</sup>

The overall impression is that most reviews insisted on the personal characteristics of the author rather than on his work such as his political commitment,<sup>2</sup> his knowledge of the Bible (that he reads in Hebrew) and his passion for hiking. He was described as "*Erri de Luca, un ancien terroriste devenu écrivain*" (title of the article in *Le Dauphiné libéré*, 23/05/1998), and "*Ancien gauchiste non repent, ancien ouvrier, il se passionne pour la Bible et l'escalade*" (portrait in *Libération*, 27/06/2003).

In fact, the interviewees also tended to underline his political beliefs:

"Je me dis que De Luca a dû rencontrer le type de public qui va lire *Tigre en papier* de Rollin, il a dû le rencontrer avant qu'il y ait une littérature comme ça en France, un type de littérature... C'est d'une certaine façon leur côté « *letteratura civile* » qui a dû fonctionner, et en particulier sur cette expérience, on pourrait dire, comme ça, des années 1968 en Europe. (...) Bon, ça a dû toucher un type de public qui attendait que quelque chose se dise, par la littérature, de cette expérience-là." (Claudine Plessier)

"Je comprends, par exemple, que quelqu'un de ma génération s'intéresse à la lecture de... *Aceto arcobaleno*, par exemple. Parce que je trouve qu'il y a des moments où il atteint des points de vérité assez intéressants sur cette expérience, sur l'expérience de ma génération, qui avait 20 ans dans les années 1968." (Jean-Pierre Romano)

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, his main publisher refused to allow us access the press files. This may have been linked to the fact that De Luca had left them, because they told me to contact his current publisher, and guaranteed he would provide "any documentation I needed". I insisted on the fact that I was interested in the files of the books that they had published, and they offered to send a selection of articles via mail, which they did. However, we were not able to do the same as for Tabucchi, for instance. All we could get from these article was an overview of the way the author and his books (mainly *Tu, mio*) were presented in the French papers.

<sup>2</sup> He was part of *Lotta Continua*; he is famous for having decided to work in a factory for a few years, despite his origins – the Neapolitan bourgeoisie.

There is also an emphasis in the reviews on his literary qualities,<sup>1</sup> nevertheless this almost always mixed with a moral concern or the idea of a literary message. *"Il faut l'avouer, rares sont les écrivains aujourd'hui qui aillent ainsi force créatrice et hauteur des exigences morales"* (*La Croix*, 19/10/1998). *"Il y a chez Erri De Luca, ancien militant gauchiste et longtemps ouvrier, la modestie sans amertume d'un vrai poète, en quête moins de grâce que de dignité"* (*Les Inrockuptibles*, 14/20 Octobre 1998). In fact, some interviewees praise this mixture of literary genius and spirituality:

"Par exemple, moi, Erri de Luca, je trouve que c'est un auteur extrêmement significatif. D'abord, il y a une vraie intensité de la langue. En même temps, on sent que ce n'est pas de l'art pour l'art. On sent que cette tension de la langue qui aboutit à une beauté, une plénitude esthétique, est également le correspondant, est indissociable d'une tension éthique, spirituelle, et donc de quelqu'un qui voit une unité de la littérature et de la vie, et donc de faire du chemin dans sa propre humanité. Et de rouvrir un espace de l'humain où les choses ne sont pas dissociées. C'est ça que j'aime beaucoup chez lui. Il y a la dimension politique, la dimension littéraire, la dimension spirituelle, aussi. Sans être un bigot c'est quelqu'un qui lit la bible en hébreux tous les matins... Je suis extrêmement sensible à ça. En plus, moi j'aime une littérature qui est à la fois dans un mouvement d'invention, de singulier, et en même temps est porteuse d'une mémoire. C'est-à-dire, à la fois d'une mémoire de civilisation, humaine, artistique... dans tous les sens où on peut l'entendre. Et de ce point de vue là, Erri de Luca ça me comble. Il a à la fois un mouvement de métamorphose et puis il garde en lui... il renie pas ses années d'engagement politique, au contraire, il essaye de conserver ce qui en était la force motrice, et il arrive à faire une synthèse de tout ça, je trouve ça très intéressant."  
(Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

It was clear from the interviews that there is a strong personal (emotional) appreciation of De Luca's books:

"Il y a des auteurs de grande valeur, comme Erri de Luca, qui sont pas des auteurs qui font de la littérature facile, qui font une littérature exigeante... et bien, ils ont trouvé un véritable public, un socle fidèle. J'ai pu le voir au dernier Salon du Livre, il y a des gens qui ont été touchés par un livre que, en général, on leur a recommandé." (Jean-Philippe Bianchi)

The idea conveyed in this extract is that the diffusion of De Luca's books occurs by word of mouth. This is a clear sign of the public's appreciation of his work. In fact, according to some interviewees, this interest is based on a stereotypical representation of Italy.

"*Montedidio*, c'est... justement, c'est peut-être celui-là, parce que c'est les stéréotypes napolitains, plus les stéréotypes de l'errance... juive, je sais pas quoi... et les stéréotypes de l'amour, comment on dit... le vert Paradis des amours enfantines... *Le grand Meaulnes*, quoi... Au fond, on peut se poser la question, c'est peut-être ça qui intéresse les gens."  
(Jean-Pierre Romano)

"De Luca fait ça aussi. Quelque part, dans certains livres. C'est pas par hasard qu'il est très connu pour ses derniers romans... *Montedidio*, c'est ce que j'aime le moins, c'est du néoréalisme à la sauce napolitaine, c'est-à-dire, il reprend Naples des années 1950, les quartiers populaires, les gamins avec la mère qui meurt... C'est tout ce qu'on s'attend de l'Italie un peu larmoyante, les classes pauvres. Moi j'aime pas ça. Donc, sans doute, il y a une partie de ça, mais peut-être pas seulement." (Sandra Di Maggio)

<sup>1</sup> "Il faut lire Erri De Luca pour le plaisir de la littérature" (*La liberté*, 10/10/1998).

De Luca is liked by the French public because he portrays an image of Italy, especially of Naples, that the people expect. This reminds us of the idea of 'close exoticism' that was developed previously. Nonetheless, we also find that the interviewee do not believe that De Luca's success is related to Italy:

"Même le dernier, Montedidio, qui pourtant parlait d'un petit garçon dans un quartier très précis de Naples, avec beaucoup de napolitain dans le texte, ça n'a pas été le moteur du succès du livre, ça a été plutôt, en anglais on dirait "coming of age story", c'est l'ouverture d'un adolescent au monde et à la vie. Et la beauté du texte a fait le succès, c'est pas du tout une lecture par rapport à l'Italie." (Jean Dupasquier)

This ambiguity is a perfect illustration in the tension between the universality of the themes and the exotic rooting of the context that was highlighted in chapter six. Erri De Luca's work can be described in various ways: literary and political, aesthetic and moral, exotic and universal. In parallel, his reception in France is also characterised by certain dualities, or tensions, in the sense that he is appreciated by a large public and praised by some Italian specialists. Therefore, he enjoys both symbolical and commercial success.

#### 4. CARLO LUCARELLI: THE NEW GENERATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *POLAR*

##### 4.1. The translation of Lucarelli's novels into French, English, German and Spanish

Lucarelli belongs to the most recent generation of Italian writers and writes detective stories. His reception will be analysed as one of the group of young *polar* writers who have been quite successful since the middle of the 1990s.

Table 7.5. Dates of publication of Lucarelli's novels in several languages

Original title of the book	Italian	French	English	German	Spanish
Carta bianca	1990	1999		1998	
L'estate torbida	1991	1999 <sup>1</sup>		2000	
Nikita	1991	1998			2000
Falange armata	1992	1996			
L'indagine non autorizzata	1993				
Il giorno del lupo	1994	1997		2001	
Lupo Mannaro	1994	2003			
Guernica	1996	1998		2000	
Via delle Oche	1996	1999		2001	
Almost blue	1997	2001	2001 (USA)	1999	1999
Febbre gialla	1997	1998			
Il trillo del diavolo	1998	1999			
Autosole	1998				
L'isola dell'angelo caduto	1999	2002			2001
Mistero in blu	1999				
Autostorie	2000				
Un giorno dopo l'altro	2000				
Laura di Rimini	2001	2003			

Carlo Lucarelli published seventeen novels in twelve years, which represents more than one novel a year. Twelve of them were translated into French, six into German, three into Spanish, and only one into English.<sup>2</sup> Although more novels have been translated into other languages than French in the past two years, the difference between France and the other countries is striking. Regarding the French translations, it could be noted that there is no continuity in comparison to the dates of the Italian publications, nor does the process of translation follow the original publications. We can assume that the French publisher (as it is the case for ten out of the twelve books)

<sup>1</sup> In France, *Carta bianca* and *L'estate torbida* were published in the same book, *Carte blanche (suivi de L'été trouble)*.

<sup>2</sup> The figures could not be exact for all of the countries except for France and Italy, especially as regards the latest novels: the *Index translationum* only includes the books published before 2001, as with the national bibliographies. All of the translations were checked for the French titles, however, this was more difficult to do for the other countries for practical reasons. Therefore, Internet sources were often relied upon for the translations.

discovered *Falange armata*, and that its relative success led them to translate one of his subsequent novels (*Il giorno del lupo*), and then to buy the rights for older ones (such as *Carta bianca* and *L'estate torbida*, that were published together). However, the process was radically different elsewhere. *Almost blue* was published both in Spain (the first translation of Lucarelli's work) and in Germany (following *Carta bianca* a year previously) in 1999, quite soon after its original publication in Italy in September 1997. This book was only translated into French and English a couple of years later, in 2001, and the impetus for this came after it had been made into a film in 2000, which was directed by Alex Infascelli. We can interpret this as a relatively small interest in this author; however, when a book is adapted to a film, it creates a new kind of motivation for the publishing industry, as the people who like it may be encouraged to buy the book. In Germany, it was followed by four other books by the same author, which is a sign of interest. However, none were published in the United States and only two in Spain.

Lucarelli's case is interesting from our perspective to the extent that the French publishing world clearly behaved differently to other countries. French was not only the first language in which the author was translated, but it was also where most of his books were published. One of the reasons for this is that Lucarelli has probably benefited from the French curiosity regarding Italy. In this way, the 1980s wave has been mingled with the success of *polar* as a genre. Whereas in other countries, where the Italian myth is less evident, this author gave rise to more interest and curiosity.<sup>1</sup> We shall now look at the reception of some of Lucarelli's novels in France in order to understand how he was perceived and represented in the media.

#### 4.2. Lucarelli, spokesman of a new generation?

The newspaper articles relating to Lucarelli's novels were collected by the *Bibliothèque des Littératures Policières*, and they are purported to be exhaustive. However, articles were only for *Guernica*, *Carte blanche* (with *Un été trouble*), *Le jour du loup* (*Il giorno del lupo*), *Via delle Oche*, *Almost blue* and *L'île de l'ange déchu* (*L'isola dell'angelo caduto*).<sup>2</sup> This represents six out of the ten books that already existed at the time of consulting these files. Each book was reviewed twice, except *Almost blue* which was reviewed three times and *Guernica* four. All of these articles were written at the time when the book was launched. All of the books except *Le jour du loup* were reviewed in *Le*

<sup>1</sup> We have not looked at the representations of Italy and Italian literature in the other countries. However, to the extent that the French Italian myth has long-standing roots, and also due to the fact that the publication of Italian novels have been higher in France than in Germany and Spain (a fortiori the USA and the UK) in the 1980s and 1990s, we can easily assume that these representations are less romanticized than in France.

<sup>2</sup> The files only went as far as in 2002, so there may also have been some articles about *Loup-garou* (*Lupo mannaro*) and *Laura di Rimini*.

*Monde*. These articles were usually no longer than a paragraph, however, a two-columns article was written for *Carte blanche* and a one-column for *Almost blue*. For the rest, three reviews were published in *Télérama* (one whole page for *Le jour du loup*), two inserts in *Libération* and two in *La Quinzaine littéraire*, one in *Lire* and one in *Livres-Hebdo* (which is not widely distributed as it is a more professional weekly paper), and a one-page article in *Le Magazine littéraire*. Overall, the opinions on Lucarelli's books were favourable, but not excellent (apart from *Le Monde* on *Guernica*) and sometimes less enthusiastic (*Télérama* on *Guernica* and *Le Monde* on *Carte blanche*). Surprisingly, the longest articles were the most critical. In particular, they denounced the fact that the author made them uncomfortable by his cynical tone and by creating a rather squalid atmosphere. Lucarelli was seldom presented as being part of a lineage, apart from *Le Magazine littéraire* on *Via delle Oche* that connected him with many Italian authors of detective stories of the young generation. In fact, this article was written in 2000, and at that time many young authors, such as Fois and Ammaniti, had started to break through on the scene. On the whole, Lucarelli was not seen as a young Italian writer conveying the concerns, style and literature of a generation, but instead as an author of thrillers whose most obvious talent lays his ability to create a framework of action which is deeply disquieting and realistic. However, no reference was made to his writing style, for instance, and nor to the fact that he gives an unusual vision of the city where his actions take place, Bologna (which is what caught the attention of the public in Italy in the first place).

We showed that Lucarelli probably benefited from the French curiosity regarding Italy. The analysis of the press files allows us to refine this statement. More precisely, he has benefited from a certain aura of the French *polar* in France at the end of the 1990s, which was instigated by the Cannibals, as described in chapter five. This analysis shall now be placed into perspective by looking at the route taken by another writer of the same generation, Niccolo' Ammaniti, who was also part of the Cannibals movement.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.3. Niccolo' Ammaniti, other ex-Cannibal

Table 7.6. Dates of publication of Ammaniti's novels in several languages

Original title of the book	Italian	French	English	German	Spanish
Fango	1996	1998			1996
Branchie	1997	1999		1998	1998
Ti prendo e ti porto via	1999	2001			
Io non ho paura	2001	2002	2003 (USA)	2002	2002

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the press files for Ammaniti's books were not available, this is why his case will be used only to give relief to the analysis of Lucarelli's career in France.

The French translations of Ammaniti's novels follow the pattern of the original publications and always come two years after the original. His first novel, *Fango*, was released in Spain the same year as in Italy. The second one was translated one year earlier (as with the German version, that was the first publication of a novel by Ammaniti). *Io non ho paura*, his latest book, received critical acclaim in Italy, and was translated simultaneously in France, Germany and Spain in 2002. In the context of the French translation, it had been ready by the end of 2001, however the publisher decided to release it at the Paris Book Fair of March 2002. This book had an excellent reception:

"Ce texte il a reçu des critiques... il a mis d'accord... il a eu des critiques dithyrambiques de... ça allait de *Techikart* au *Figaro Madame* en passant par le *Nouvel Observateur*, *l'Express* etc. (...) Niccolo' Ammaniti, il est formidable, je trouve que c'est vraiment le meilleur de toute la nouvelle génération. Ca, pour le coup, c'est un écrivain, un vrai, un grand, moi je crois en lui. Bon, je pense que s'il s'était appelé Tom Wolf il aurait vendu 100, 150 000, 200 000 exemplaires, aussi bien pour l'avant-dernier, *Je t'emmène*, que pour *Je n'ai pas peur*." (Myrille Jacob)

This interviewee confirms this success and points out the paradox of Italian commercial literature in France: the *polar* is usually seen by the publishers as a sub-genre – even though it is an increasingly less radical opinion –, however, they publish them as they are likely to enjoy commercial success. However, Italian authors rarely sell as much as American ones. This illustrates the difference between Lucarelli and Ammaniti: the former is above all a *polar* writer, and the publication of his novels follow the mechanisms of commercial literature. This is confirmed by his reception in the media, which is rather neutral and not related to what we referred to as 'Italian curiosity'. The latter has followed a different route. He was firstly presented as one of the young Cannibals, similar to Lucarelli, however the focus has switched to the quality and the innovativeness of his writing. In addition, he has progressively distanced himself from the thriller genre, and also from the Cannibals.

"Et puis lui c'est vraiment un auteur, il a su se secouer... se débarrasser de l'étiquette cannibale, c'était pas évident." (Danièle Perrineau)

"Et puis j'apprends que maintenant Ammaniti renie, maintenant, les Cannibales, et bon, comme toujours dans les écoles. Au bout d'un moment il dit bon, je suis seul... Il y a toujours un moment où on dit, moi je suis différent des autres." (Paul Darlignac)

Ammaniti's reputation has moved from that of a young '*trash literature*' writer, potential exponent of a new (commercial) genre, to that of a talented young writer, often presented by the interviewees as the only literary genius of his generation. In fact, all of his books have been translated into French, which has not been the case for Lucarelli. This comparison shows that two authors that were originally characterised in the same generation, have since gone on to establish very different careers in France and in other countries. As Lucarelli never distanced



himself from the *polar*, he remained closed in the field of a rather commercial literature (he is published in the Gallimard *Série Noire*, which is a pocket collection destined to a wide audience). Ammaniti managed to establish himself as a literary writer and gain the symbolic esteem of the majority of the actors in the field of Italian literature in France.

## 5. ANDREA CAMILLERI: EXOTISM OR AUTHENTICITY?

### 5.1. The translation of Camilleri's novels into French, English, German and Spanish

Camilleri is approximately the same age as Eco, however he started writing novels very late, at the beginning of the 1990s. In this respect, he is located between De Luca's generation and the most recent one, composed of Italian writers who started to publish in the middle of the 1990s. He mostly writes detective novels. This is interesting from our perspective as the development of this genre in Italy is a recent phenomenon (as opposed to French or Anglo-Saxon literature) and Camilleri is one of the most successful writers of this genre in France. Moreover, his books contain many references to Sicily (his native region), and thus it also makes sense in the context of the rise of "regional literature" in Italy.

*Table 7.7. Dates of publication of Camilleri's novels in several languages<sup>1</sup>*

<i>Original titles of the novels</i>	<i>Italian</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
La stagione della caccia	1992	2001		2001	2000
la bolla di componenda	1993	2002		2002	
La forma dell'acqua	1994	1998	2002 (USA)	1999	2002
Il birraio di Preston	1995	1999		2000	1999
Il gioco della mosca	1995	2000		2001	
Il cane di terracotta	1996	1999	2003 (USA)	1999	1999
Il ladro di merendine	1996	2000	2003 (USA)	1999	2000
La voce del violino	1997	2001	2003 (USA)	2000	2000
La strage dimenticata	1997	2002		2002	
Un filo di fumo	1997	2002		2001	2001
La concessione del telefono	1998	1999		1998	1999
Un mese con Montalbano	1998	1999		2001	1999
Il corso delle cose	1998	2004		2000	2000
La mossa del cavallo	2000	2000		2000	
La gita a Tindari	2000	2002	2004 (USA)	2001	2001
Gli arancini di Montalbano	2000	2001		2002	2002
Biografia del figlio cambiato	2000	2002		2001	
La scomparsa di Pato'	2000	2002		2002	2002
L'odore della notte	2001	2001		2002	2003

Camilleri published ten novels in Italy between 1992 and 1997, but none of them were translated before 1998. From all nineteen novels that he published between 1992 and 2001, all of them have

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the usual sources (*Index Translationum*, National Bibliographies, catalogues), there is a repertoire of the translations on Camilleri's fan club website: [www.vigata.org](http://www.vigata.org)

been translated into French<sup>1</sup> and German, fourteen into Spanish and only four into English<sup>2</sup> (one in the United Kingdom and three in the United States). The publications were concentrated between 1998 and 2003 and therefore, this period is too short to demonstrate the differences between the times of publication in the different countries.

Overall, the French and the German publishing worlds have been the most active regarding the publication of Camilleri's novels; while Spain have been slightly less productive. We can note that four of the five novels that were translated into French and German but not into Spanish were only translated into these two languages. The fifth one was only translated into French, German and Turkish.<sup>3</sup> In addition, *La voce del violino* and *Il cane di terracotta* have been translated into twelve languages, *La forma dell'acqua* into fourteen.

The trends in the English translations are representative of the trends in literary translations that were highlighted in chapter one and constitute a small group (between 1996 and 1999, around 5% of the total number of translated books were translations into English, 13 into French, 16% into German and 10% into Spanish). The three novels translated into English – *La forma dell'acqua*, *Il cane di terracotta*, *Il ladro di merendine* and *La voce del violino* – are from the Montalbano series in which the protagonist is a police detective based in a small village of Sicily. As these were not translated until three years after the original date of publication, we can assume that the latest Montalbano novels could also be translated into English in the future.

## 5.2. The reception of Camilleri in France and the Experience of Foreign

In order to understand how Camilleri was received in France, the newspapers articles relating to his books were accessed through the *Bibliothèque des littératures policières*. In total, there were fifty reviews of thirteen books, around four reviews per book in average (with variations from one for *L'excursion à Tindari* to seven for *Chien de faïence*). They were published in twenty-three different newspapers and magazines – daily, weekly and monthly. Overall, the reviews are rather homogeneous, focusing on three dimensions: Sicily, the *polar* and the books success in Italy. Most of the critiques are positive, but not dithyrambic. The author is presented as a "*respectable septuagénaire*" (*Marianne*, 21/08/2000), and there are many references to the beginning of his career as a play-wright. He is associated with Montalbàn, Simenon and sometimes Sciascia, who are three *polar* authors coming from different countries and belonging to different generations: this illustrates the difficulty of categorizing Camilleri ("young *polar* generation", "old guard" and so

<sup>1</sup> For *Il corso delle cose*, the rights have been bought, and the publication is planned in October 2004.

<sup>2</sup> For *La gita a Tindari*, the rights have been bought, and the publication is planned in 2004.

<sup>3</sup> We can also note that these five novels do not belong to the Montalbano series.

on). This ambiguity is also expressed by a certain insistence on his success in Italy and on the nature of his work. For example, the word "*polar*" is mentioned at least 19 times. "*Panique dans le monde polardeux: la camillerimania, omniprésente en Italie, gagne la France*", as Alain Nevez wrote in *Télérama* (14/06/2001). Finally, Camilleri is above all Sicilian and there are at least ten direct references to Sicily (and five to Mafia) in the titles of the reviews, which strongly orientates the reader. At the same time, the context of the book is presented in forty-three of the fifty reviews, emphasizing on the geographical dimension.

Taken as a whole, the analysis of these articles leads us to two conclusions. Firstly, there is a clear focus on Sicily, and we can wonder which kind of representations are involved here: several dimensions are mingled (the Mafia, the climate, the food, the Mediterranean spirit, and so on), and we want to understand how they are perceived by the public – especially if the public has any pre-conceived ideas about Sicily. Furthermore, are they indigenous (this means that they pertain to the field of the professionals of literature in a general way) or are they typical of the French representations of Sicily? We also aim to understand the nature of the public's interest (i.e. if why they buy Camilleri's books) in order to note if this is connected to the image of Sicily? Secondly, we should question whether the abundance of reviews is accompanied by a relative success of his books in France. Unfortunately, we have no indications of the sales, however one of the interviewees told me that there has been a significant inflation of the cost of buying the rights for translation. For example, the cost of the rights went up from 50,000 francs (approx 7,500 euros) for *La forma dell'acqua* in 1998, to 220,000 francs (approx 33,000 euros) for *La gita a Tindari* in 2002. In addition, according to one of the translators:

" Donc, euh... donc il y a ... donc j'ai vendu... enfin, j'ai fait acheter Camilleri par... par Y, et X devait l'acheter aussi et ils ont un peu traîné, et puis en fait on devait publier un des romans chez X, qu'on a publié sous le nom *Roman1*, et en fait on s'est aperçus à un moment donné que comme Camilleri... entre temps il y avait un an qui était passé et le phénomène Camilleri avait commencé en Italie... les éditeurs français avaient commencé à se précipiter. Et... et donc Z avait envoyé en délégation à Palerme auprès de Madame Sellerio un italien, charmant apparemment, qui avait réussi plus ou moins à la convaincre de laisser tomber X... parce que X n'avait pas finalisé les accords, encore, donc ils ont failli perdre *Roman1*, il y a eu un peu une bagarre. Finalement, comme X est intervenue, Camilleri lui-même a dit son mot, on a conservé *Roman1*. Mais... donc, je dis ça pour décrire un peu le climat." (Sylvain Renucci)<sup>1</sup>

The battle for the rights which is described here shows that there is a strong interest in Camilleri, at least within the field of publishing. This is the key point we want to illustrate through the analysis of the career of this author in France. In other words, there is a gap between the publishing world, the reviewers and the public, that only comes to light when comparing the different sources. This gap relates directly to the issue of translation.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the same story as that told by Marianne Grange that we referred to previously.

In fact, one of the specificities of this author is that he writes in a dialectal form of Italian, which means that it is neither Italian nor dialect, but instead it is a mixture of the two. He uses several dialects (Sicilian, Tuscan, Ligurian, among others), and he also invents some words in order to put this mixed language into perspective. Ultimately, the translation of this language has created quite a few problems in France.<sup>1</sup>

"Ca c'est un grave problème, parce que là on se trouve confrontés à l'absence d'un instrument linguistique en français pour rendre compte d'une réalité dialectale... Oui, on n'a pas en d'autre termes, en français, les instruments qui permettent de rendre effectivement compte d'une littérature dialectale." (Marco Guglielmi)

Camilleri's novels were translated by many people, but it was mainly done by two individuals who made very different choices.<sup>2</sup> Most of the Montalbano novels have been translated by François Léandre, who is also head of an Italian collection for a medium-size Parisian publisher and also a novelist himself. Most of the other novels have been translated by Daniel Buisson, a professor of Italian contemporary literature at the university in a big provincial city. François Léandre has chosen to use slang words to transpose the dialectal words into French. He has also transformed some French words phonetically in order to make the Italian pronunciations which are typical of a certain accent.<sup>3</sup> Daniel Buisson's choice is radically different as he has translated the Sicilian words with a French dialect which is not used any more.<sup>4</sup> These two methods involve different techniques of translation and a different kind of background knowledge. Among the italianists, there is a gap between those who defend François Léandre and those who believe Daniel Buisson has found the best solution.<sup>5</sup>

From our perspective, this debate is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it illustrates the difficulty of solving translation problems in the context of dialects, which pertains to the differences between France and Italy in terms of regional diversity. The increasing regional setting has been one of the recent evolutions of Italian literature. In this respect, Camilleri's novels are symptomatic of contemporary Italian literature. The fact that these translations give rise to such a debate among the French italianists demonstrates the persistence of a literary interest. Even though the publishing world is increasingly subject to economic constraints, the italianists continue to take interest in the recent literary trends and produce a discourse which

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<sup>1</sup> This has probably created problems in other countries as well.

<sup>2</sup> As they are part of our interviewees, and for the sake of anonymity, we will call them here François Léandre and Daniel Buisson (these names are not those used for the interview quotations).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, the Tuscan pronunciation tends to cancel the sound "K" ("casa" is pronounced "hasa", with an aspired sound H); in the translation, for instance, the French word "con" becomes "on".

<sup>4</sup> At the end of the first book which was translated this way, there is even a glossary of the words used.

<sup>5</sup> See Annex 4: "Camilleri and the issue of translation" for further description of the debate among the specialists and the nature of the arguments.

adapts to the new features. Secondly, the two translators belong to very different worlds (academia and publishing world), and their opposition is also a reflection of the tensions between these worlds in terms of translation competencies. In the interviews, all the academics defended Daniel Buisson's view, whereas François Léandre's work was mostly appreciated by publishers. Most academics accuse François Léandre's translations of being inexact and insufficient to render enough the complexity of the interactions between dialect, and thereby to simplify the writing. The fact that this is appreciated more by the members of the publishing world can be related to the commercialisation that we have referred to many times. In fact, this simplification of the texts is also a way of making them accessible to a wider public.<sup>1</sup> In this way, it strengthens the idea of a de-literarisation of the publications that we have already evoked. This needs to be analysed in relation to the press files that we have looked at. In fact, of the fifty articles, thirty-five mentioned the name of the translator, but only two referred to the quality of the translation (by François Léandre, actually). Therefore, this means that there is no reference to the problematic aspect of the operation and no visibility of the specialists' debate in the reviews.

As we saw, Camilleri is above all presented as a writer of detective stories, and the focus is on his ability to construct entertaining stories. Sicily is pictured as a nice exotic background, however, the issue of dialect is not relevant for the reviews, to the extent that it is too technical (or perhaps too Italian?). This brings us back to question of exoticism. In this case, the interests of the publishing world are drifting away from those of the academic world, and seem to be closer to those of the newspapers' reviewers (i.e. the media literary critics). In fact, the exclusion of the issue of dialect in the presentation of Camilleri to the public<sup>2</sup> paves the way for a simplistic image of Sicily, which is reduced to an exotic land but is not related to a general trend in Italian literature, namely the increasing role of regions. This is a simplification of the "experience of the other" (Berman, 1984), that leads to the reinforcement of the stereotypical image of Sicily.

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As far as the dates of publications are concerned, we can draw conclusions on two general issues. Firstly, France has a specific place in the international careers of the five Italian authors that we looked at. The publication of their books is taking place more frequently in French and, on average, it takes place before the publications in other languages. This specificity is underlined by some of the statistics regarding translations that we analysed in chapter one. Between 1996 and 1999, 16% of the worldwide translations were translations into German, 12.8% into French and

<sup>1</sup> Actually, one of the criticisms of Daniel Buisson's translations is that they are difficult to read.

<sup>2</sup> That is to say the book reviews, but also the publishers' catalogues and launching operations.

10% into Spanish. Logically, we could expect that there would be more translations from Italian into German than into French. Italian literature is, thus, a case that is not completely representative of what happens globally; and this highlights the particular place of France in the trajectories of Italian novels. However, and this is the second feature we want to emphasize, as only 5,2% of the overall translations are translations into English, we can say that in this respect the case of Italian literature is representative of the overall situation. In fact, there are less translations of Italian novels into English than into French, German or Spanish. Moreover, the translations into English, on average, are published later than the ones from other languages. It seems as if the Anglo-American considers the performances of the books or authors on the other markets before investing in the translation. This is explained by one feature of this market, namely the dominance of the commercial logic (Schiffrin, 1999). In order to minimize the risk inherent in the publication of foreign literature, they only publish the books that have been successful in their country of origin, or even in other parts of Europe. This illustrates the way that the commercial pole of the publishing world functions.

The analysis of the reception of our five authors in France has illustrated several issues that we had dealt with in the previous chapters, such as the quest for best sellers, the content of the books and their implication, the constitution of literary or editorial myths, the advent of a new genre and the image of Italy. Throughout the dissertation, we have pointed out the existing tension between two poles in the publishing world, symbolic and commercial. The ambiguity of De Luca's success (he is both praised for the literary quality of his books and presented as a worthy commercial risk) illustrates this duality. More precisely, we have shown that the decisions leading to the publication of symbolic Italian literature used to be based on romanticized representations of Italy coming from the Renaissance and the historical travels there. These representations constitute an ambiguous mixture of fascination and contempt, which still prevails today, even though it is expressed in a different way. The reception of Umberto Eco's books in France illustrates this ambiguity as he is regarded both with respect and irony. This is even more interesting as the *Name of the Rose* is the Italian novel that was most sold in France (and not only). In this way, its success paved the way for the imposition of commercial criteria in the selection of Italian novels. In fact, there are certain authors who are chosen by commercial pole for their commercial value, especially those who write thrillers such as Lucarelli. This can be related to the fact that the emphasis on literary quality seems to be declining, to the benefit of other criteria, such as political belief in the case of Tabucchi (his books are often presented as examples of a certain Italian awareness of the need of political commitment). However, we could question whether this search for authenticity (in the sense of something typically Italian) also testifies to

the dilution of Italy's image in France, which is increasingly based on clichés. In particular, we have seen that Camilleri's success in France has helped to reinforce this stereotypical image. Overall, the analysis of the trajectories of these five authors' books outside Italy represents an illustration of the shift that we have highlighted in this work, namely the duality that characterises the publishing world. This duality has always existed but is more evident since the 1980s, and it has become more imbalanced, in the sense that the commercial pole is progressively extending to the detriment of the symbolic one. In the case of Italy, this is emphasized (and also caused) by a progressive deconstruction of the image of the other that used to prevail in France and that was based on historically rooted representations.



## Conclusion

The object of this work is to analyse in-depth the mechanisms of publication of Italian literature in France between 1982 and 2001: the cultural representations at stake, the actors involved, their position in the field, their role in the publication and the nature of the decision-making process within the publishing houses. This addresses two general issues: on the one hand, the nature and evolution of Franco-Italian cultural relations and representations over time. On the other, the actual context of cultural globalisation that deeply affects the functioning of cultural industries. In the introduction, we raised three questions that were to find answers in the dissertation. The first one pertained to the relation between bi-national literary exchanges and the world-wide process of globalisation. Empirically, it addressed the possibility of relating the changes in the publication of Italian novels in France to more general processes of cultural flows. The second question was that of the weight of cultural representations in those cultural exchanges. Concretely, we examined how Italy's image in France has evolved in the last two decades and how this has influenced the publication of Italian novels. Finally, we sought to understand how the commercial logic influences the functioning of cultural industries. In particular, we wanted to find out how the commercial logic progressively gained influence in the French publishing world, especially in the process of editorial decision-making.

In order to relate the translation flows between France and Italy to more general processes of globalisation, we have proposed theoretical solutions to envisage these flows within a worldwide context. In fact, there are ways of conceptualising the relations of domination at stake in the publication of translated books, in particular through the notion of world systems. What does it mean to translate an Italian novel into French? This precisely depends on the structure of the transnational space which conveys a hierarchy with specific modes of domination. Especially, there are recurrent patterns, such as those described by Heilbron in his analysis of the world-system of translation (Heilbron, 1996, 1999): this system is based on a core-periphery structure, that corresponds to the structure of the imports. English is the hyper-central language, French, German and Russian the central ones.<sup>1</sup> This means that most translations are made from English, and to a lesser extent from French or German. There is a semi-peripheral area, constituted by Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Danish, Hungarian, Polish, Czech and Dutch.<sup>2</sup> The flows go mainly

<sup>1</sup> Russian belonged to the centre until the mid-1990s, its position may be questioned today.

<sup>2</sup> This list also would need to be updated.

from the core to the periphery; there are thus uneven relationships, however, this does not mean that the semi-peripheral languages are more and more marginalized vis-à-vis the central language. The translations from Italian into French go from a semi-peripheral to a central language, which is not the most widespread direction. Nonetheless, looking at this flow led us to several observations that may reflect some general transformations of the world-system.

First, we have seen that there was an increase of the number of literary translations from Italian into French from the beginning of the 1980s: the number of novels translated has tripled, from 35 in 1980 to 108 in 1998, whereas that of fiction in general has multiplied by 2,45 (from 60 to 147 books). Between these two dates, the total number of literary translations from all languages published in France has doubled.<sup>1</sup> Thus, compared to translations of other literatures, those of Italian novels have increased in larger proportion. Furthermore, the total number of worldwide translations published yearly has multiplied by 1,2.<sup>2</sup> It appears that the total number of yearly translations, whether literary or not, tends to increase, along with the translations into French from all genres. In this context, the type of translations we are looking at is representative of the worldwide trend. One of the purposes of this work was to decipher the nature of the quantitative increase of the translations of Italian novels into French. We have shown that it results – at least partly – from the transformation of the publishing industry, especially from the increasing dominance of the commercial pole over the symbolic one. We will come back to the nature of this transformation, but we can already suggest that, to the extent that it does not only regard the French publishing world but the publishing industries of most Western countries, the explications for the increasing number of translations in France may apply to other systems as well. This is one possible generalisation of the analysis of our bi-national case study, generalisation that pertains to what we defined as cultural globalisation.

The second outcome of our analysis that is interesting in the light of generalisation pertains to the centrality of France in the international literary system, as defined by Casanova. Paris is the capital of the *République mondiale des lettres*, the geography of which was constituted "*à partir de l'opposition entre une capitale littéraire (donc universelle) et des contrées qui en dépendent (littérairement) et qui se définissent par leur distance esthétique à la capitale*" (Casanova, 1999: 24). In the interviewees' discourses we found the idea that, because Paris has such a key position in the worldwide publishing industry, the evolution of the French scene is likely to reflect more global trends. More generally, the analysis of the trajectories of five authors' books in a few Western countries showed that, on average, Italian novels are translated into French more often than into other languages (especially

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<sup>1</sup> From 2159 in 1980 to 4415 in 1998.

<sup>2</sup> From 50,000 in 1980 to 72,000 in 1998 for all translations. Literary translations increased in a slightly larger proportion (1,4 times), from 23,500 to 33,400.

English), and that the delays of publication of the translations are usually shorter than in other countries. This testifies to the centrality of France in the case of Italian novels. Of course, the historical rooting of Italy's image in France undeniably favours the publication of Italian novels, albeit decreasingly. In either case, we need to remember that the French scene has played a symbolic role on the international scene: the fact that a book is translated into French was somehow a guarantee of either its literary value or its commercial success. This centrality might be less obvious today, but there are still traces of it. We can assume that, because Paris has been the place of symbolic consecration for years, the resistance of the French symbolic pole is at least as active as those of other countries. The description of the progressive overwhelming of the commercial pole on the historically strong French symbolic pole thus allows us to generalise the mechanisms that operate with regard to developments taking place in other countries and even at the worldwide level.

It thus appears that bi-national literary exchanges relate to the worldwide processes of globalisation. This relation pertains to the current opposition between the commercial and the symbolic poles of the publishing worlds and to the progressive domination of the former on the latter. Accordingly, the publication of Italian novels in France in the last two decades is an interesting case study for the analysis of the concrete manifestations and consequences of what is referred to as cultural globalisation. This dimension links to, on the one hand, the study of the influence of cultural representations on the publications, and on the other, to the concrete mechanisms of spreading of the commercial logic in the publishing world.

As far as Italy's image in France is concerned, we have shown in chapter 2 that the ambiguous representation that the French hold of their neighbouring country takes root in the Renaissance and is the result of a long-term process of construction. It is based on a certain fascination for Italian inventiveness, but also on a kind of scorn for their laziness and lack of rigor. These contradictory features, born with Humanism in reaction to the French admiration for Italian scientific production during the Renaissance, have persisted throughout the centuries, and have progressively been reinforced by various stereotypes. At the time of voyages to Italy, it assumed a romantic tone; we can define this image as romanticized, to the extent that there is an emphasis on romantic features that may belong to the past and have turned into clichés. This representation is still present nowadays, but it mingles with other images, influenced by the politico-economic context (of both countries, and also of the international scene). The increasing communication between countries has induced a major openness of the French and thus the

progressive weakening of Italy's romanticized and fixed-in-time image to the profit of a more contemporary-based representation.

We saw in the interviewees' discourse that the process of decision-making leading to the publication of Italian novels is influenced by the representations of Italy, in several respects. First, when the publishers explain how they select the books with a view to publication, they often insist on the importance of luck or hazard, emphasizing the myth of *éditeur-découvreur*, that has an almost magical component. This pertains to the romanticized image of the country: Italian novels are discovered through means that mobilize the publisher's imagination. The publisher uses his own intuition and his taste, non-rational features that are at the core of the image of Italian inventiveness.

Secondly, we can assert that the constant reference to Italy, the construction of an image of this country in France, as well as the common Latin belonging, testify to a cultural proximity of the two countries that favours what we called a sympathy factor. Accordingly, publishers may choose an Italian novel instead of one from a country culturally more distant (such as Germany) because they assume it will benefit from the public's a priori sympathy factor.

Finally, part of Italy's image in France today is politically rooted: especially, it is the country of active leftist activism in the 1970s and 1980s. As we saw in the dissertation, there are strong intellectual networks between the two countries, born above all when the Italian intellectuals who escaped their country chose Paris as place of exile. At the editorial level, the proximity led in the publication of key political texts, including literary ones. Recently, the advent of Silvio Berlusconi strengthened the political component of Italy's image in France: it is considered necessary to publish Italian novels that counter the image of Italy conveyed by its actual government. In particular, this has favoured the republication of authors with a certain political commitment, such as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Leonardo Sciascia.<sup>1</sup> The publications motivated by this political and intellectual project are rather marginal quantitatively but they testify to the influence of Italy's image in the publications – especially the part of its image pertaining to the current political context.

Finally, we have shown that part of Italy's image in France is increasingly based on clichés inherited from past representations. This has also been reinforced by the publication of authors such as Andrea Camilleri: the readers can find in his novels all the stereotypes that constitute their representation of Italy (specifically Sicily). This is – at least partly – due to the difficulty to translate these texts. In this case, the publisher selects books likely to have a commercial success because they serve a certain image of Italy which is more and more prevalent in France. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Respectively by Le Seuil and Gallimard in 2001 and Fayard in 1999-2000.

all the more prone to happen as more and more publishers have no specific knowledge of Italian culture, and thus adhere to the most widespread representations of the country.

We have thus shown that the representations of Italy influence the publication of Italian novels in France in many ways. For this purpose, we have adopted a historical perspective, because we envisaged the construction of cultural representations as a long-term process. The other source used here were the interviews, especially the parts pertaining to the images of Italy. The contemporary representations were elucidated by the members of the field of publication of Italian literature in France. To the extent that the question of collective representations raises methodological difficulties, we argue that looking at indigenous constructions is interesting as the field is composed of specialists and non specialists of Italy. The confrontation of the two views is fruitful because it illustrates both the shift of image (which is less and less based on an active knowledge of Italy) and the transformations of the structure of the publishing world (the members of which are less specialized in one foreign literature).

These findings address the more general issue of the way cultural representations are changing, especially as communication between countries is made increasingly easy by the recent technological innovations and, in Europe, by the opening of frontiers between States. Italy's image in France as it emerged in the past seems to be progressively overwhelmed by a variety of representations that find roots in the political, economic and social contemporary realities. This influences the publication of Italian novels in France, that is less and less decided on the basis of the romanticized criteria that used to prevail. This trend also led to a shift in the genre of the novels translated into French: the French publishers of the 1980s were interested in the authors who contributed to the fulfilment of an intellectual project based on a cultural and political proximity of the two countries, and whose novels had a high literary and symbolic legitimacy. Today, the interest in commercial novels likely to satisfy a wider public is definitely growing. We can assume that this influence of cultural representations impacts on the editorial decisions; it reflects recent transformations in the nature of communication between the countries and the increasing weight of the actual socio-economic and political context in the construction of the representations. This tendency does not only regard the publication of Italian novels in France, but can be generalised.

The third issue at stake in this work was to understand the influence of commercial logic on the French publishing world, in particular the role and relevance of commercial criteria in the editorial decisions that lead to the publication of Italian novels in France. We introduced the notion of economic constraint that carries the idea that the commercial logic stands in opposition

to another logic, that we called literary or symbolic. This is related to the existence of two poles of the publishing world: on the one hand, the symbolic pole, based on literary value and a kind of intellectual mission that some publishers wish to fulfil. On the other hand, the commercial pole, that is profit-oriented and privileges the potential commercial success of books, sometimes to the detriment of their literary value. These two poles do not necessarily correspond to two groups of publishing houses; they convey two logics that coexist, often for the publication of the same book.

Overall, we have shown that the commercial logic is progressively gaining weight on the symbolic one, at several levels. First, on the basis of an analysis of the corpus of the 1550 Italian novels published in France between 1982 and 2001, we have illustrated the growing influence of financial groups on the publishing world, especially as they own an increasing part of the houses that publish Italian literature. Besides, the circuits of diffusion and distribution are also more and more concentrated. This concentration is accompanied by another transformation that affects the decision-making regarding publication: diffusion and distribution play an increasingly important role because the focus is more and more on the potential economic success of the book.

This dissertation has analysed this phenomenon from the point of view mainly of the publishers. They are a diverse group but what they have in common is that they are the people who make the ultimate decision to publish a book. The analysis of the interviews, especially those with publishers, brought to light the tension between the commercial and the symbolic logic. On the one hand, they present their choices as dependant on their own will. On the other, the presence of constraints of several kinds emerges from the analysis of their discourses. These constraints are: the success of the book in its home country, which can be a guarantee of success in France (more precisely, it is often presented as a necessary but not sufficient condition); the topic of the book that has to fit into the catalogue of the publishing house and that has to be likely to seduce a large public; its genre, that has to follow certain trends (the detective novels, for instance). These constraints converge into what we referred to as economic constraint, based on the idea that the book is a commercial product and thus should bring profit to the firm. In order to increase the profit, the publisher needs to increase the incomes and lower the costs. The more copies of a book are sold, the higher the income. The reduction of the production costs operates at several levels, not only strictly economic ones. For instance, the publishers explain that they usually hire the same translators, because they know and trust them and thus avoid having to check their competence and the quality of their work before signing the contract for a book. This can be interpreted as a reduction of the production costs of the book, to the extent that the publishers minimize the risk and time they spend to contact a translator and take him or her on

trial. This can be related to the time constraint which is increasingly important in the publishing industry. The number of yearly translations is growing; we have shown for a few authors that overall the delay between the Italian and the French version of the same book is increasingly short. This requires the publishers, the translators and all the people who participate in the publication of a book to work more quickly. Time is one manifestation of the increasing dominance of the economic constraint that often operates to the detriment of the symbolic logic. In the symbolic pole of the publishing world, the focus is rather on the literary quality of the book and on its potential symbolic esteem and success. In a way, the attention put on the conception of the book is more accurate: for instance, the translator has to fully understand the author's voice and to be able to render it audible in French. Therefore, it may be worth looking for the right person, if he or she cannot be found among the usual collaborators, even if it takes some time. In this sense, the time constraint is less heavy. All the same, the purpose is not only to sell the most copies possible but also to be consecrated by the right institutions and circuits. For instance, we saw in the analysis of the press files of five authors that the 'commercial' books are reviewed in many papers, whereas the variety is much narrower for 'symbolic' ones. Also, we noted that the articles in the papers with high symbolic prestige are usually more detailed, longer and contain more intellectual and literary references than the ones written for a wider public.

The qualitative analysis of interviews offers the possibility to look at the way the actors of the publication present and interpret their actions. Besides, the interview scheme was constructed such that the actors would decompose their action into a series of tasks (finding a book, defining criteria of selection, choosing a translator and so on); the publication of a book is thus presented as a chain of actions (that leave more or less space for improvisation and innovation). The subsequent confrontation with the publishers' views on each of them allowed us to take into account several possible techniques and motivations. We thus shed light upon the almost constant tension between the commercial and the symbolic logic, which was crucial in our understanding of the role of the economic constraint in the process of decision-making leading to the publication of Italian novels in France.

We have suggested answers to three major questions that intermingle with each other in a complex way. In order to link, on the one hand, the bi-national and the international dimensions and, on the other, historical cultural representations and the strengthening of the commercial pole, we have mobilized several methods of inquiry, each of them bringing elements of analysis that could not have been discovered otherwise. This is the reason why we chose a multi-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis, interviews, observation and scanning of press files.

The statistics on worldwide translations allowed us to understand the symbolic meaning of translations from Italian into French compared to other types of flows. The quantitative analysis of the corpus of all Italian novels translated into French between 1982 and 2001 led us to conclusions as regards the evolution of the structure of the publishing world. We envisaged this world as a unified space, especially on the basis of observations realised at the Paris book fair that featured Italy as honour guest, which was like a condensation of the interactions between the members of the field. The interviews with these actors were a relevant part of our fieldwork, and allowed us to decipher the representations at stake in the process of decision-making. Finally, the analysis of the press files of five authors' books stood as an illustration of various features highlighted in the dissertation. All these methodologies participated to formulating the main outcome of our analysis. As it brings to light the way the commercial logic progressively overwhelms the symbolic logic that used to prevail in the French publishing world, the detailed description of the mechanisms of publication of Italian novels in France between 1982 and 2001 constitutes one case of analysis of the manifestations and influence of cultural globalisation on the functioning of cultural industries.

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We have described several kinds of domination: that of the French upon the Italians (and vice versa) through history, that of a central language on to a semi-peripheral one, that of the commercial pole of the publishing world upon the symbolic one, and so on. Overall, we can say that cultural relationships between France and Italy have been imbalanced, at least since the Renaissance: France has exercised a form of cultural domination on his neighbouring country. At the literary level, this has found expression in that Italians have been more interested in French literature than the French in Italian literature. Recently, the nature of the relation has changed, in particular because Italy's image in France is progressively moving away from the representations inherited throughout the centuries. However, as far as literary translations are concerned, the evolutions have been parallel, Italy has also published more French novels in the last two decades. We could say that the relation of domination has gone through various modifications that we described throughout this work, but it would be delicate to conclude that it is not of actuality any more.

The analyses of cultural globalisation processes are often phrased in terms of cultural domination, referring to the spreading of one form of culture all over the world. The underlying idea is that the dominant culture somehow inhibits local forms of expression. The issue at stake is



that of increasing cultural homogeneity. Of course, social scientists have ceased to believe that globalisation leads to a homogenous worldwide culture, as suggested by MacLuhan (1968) with the image of the global village. Today, the question is rather to understand the nature of cultural homogenisation. It can be envisaged either as the spreading of one national culture (or of the culture of a group of nations) or as the increasing uniformity of local taste and cultural production. These two views are not opposed but complementary. Another issue at stake in the analysis of cultural homogenisation is that of the existing resistance to this phenomenon. In order to broaden the focus of this work, we will now address the complex issue of cultural homogenisation.

To conceive cultural homogenisation as the spreading of one national culture implies to envisage the international system as a core-periphery structure. The theory of cultural imperialism, born in the 1960s, describes the worldwide economic system as dominated by a core of advanced countries. The periphery is constituted by the third world countries, that have a very limited control on their own economic and political development. This system is based on the domination of multinational companies that produce goods of mass consumption. From a cultural point of view, it implies that a country (or a group of countries) spreads its own culture around the world in order to satisfy its own political and economic interests. In reality, this theory is a denunciation of the progressive cultural hegemony of the United States.

As a matter of fact, we have seen in this work that literary hegemony of Paris is more than put into question; the transformation of the national publishing worlds and of the international literary system have led to a decentralisation of the *République Mondiale des Lettres*. At the literary level (that is to say as regards the symbolic pole of the system), there is a multiplication of the centres (Paris, London, New York, Berlin...) reflecting the multiplication of the 'instances de consécration', and also the internationalisation of the writers themselves (Casanova, 1999). Besides, we have shown the incontestable quantitative domination of the translations from English over those from any other language. "*Pourquoi les Américains traduisent-ils si peu? La première raison, évidente, c'est que l'anglais est la langue de la communication internationale, la langue de la culture américaine qui, rappelle Georges Borchardt, agent littéraire installé à New York depuis cinquante ans, « des boissons gazeuses à la musique, a conquis le monde »*" (Levisalles, 2003). This assertion, taken out of a dossier on the international flows of translation presented in the French daily paper *Libération*, illustrates the definition of homogenisation as the spreading of one culture and thus the imposition of its

norms and standards all over the world.<sup>1</sup> However, this definition of globalisation is incomplete because it focuses on only one side of the picture.

In the dissertation, we highlighted a dilution of Italy's image in France, which is more and more based on standardized clichés. We can relate these clichés to the notion homogenisation. *"A la mythologie de la différenciation et de la diversification extraordinaire des produits, on peut opposer l'uniformisation de l'offre, tant à l'échelle nationale qu'à l'échelle internationale: la concurrence, loin de diversifier, homogénéise, la poursuite du public maximum conduisant les producteurs à rechercher des produits omnibus, valables pour des publics de tous milieux et de tous pays, parce que peu différenciés et différenciants"* (Bourdieu, 2000: 77-78). In this perspective, the stereotypes that constitute collective cultural representations of the foreigner can be viewed as a consequence of the homogenisation and uniformisation of cultural supply. We have seen that the publishers seek Italian books that convey a form of exoticism based on clichés rather than on genuine experiences and are, therefore, more easily read by a wider (and international) public. The worldwide diffusion of American culture thus leads to a homogenisation of cultural taste. However, we can wonder through which concrete mechanisms it occurs. There are several manifestations of this phenomenon, some of which we have analysed with regard to the reception of Italian literature in France.

First, we can address the issue of acceleration, which most often participates in the description of the globalisation process. As far as translations are concerned, we have seen that there is an acceleration of rhythm (the translated books are released more and more quickly after their original publication). Concretely, time constraint often emerged from the interviewees' discourse as an explanation to their choices of publication. How does this relate to the homogenisation of taste? We argue that the time constraint can lead the publishers not to take interest in books whose publication may require a longer preparation. The commercial logic implies to limit the risks, and the longer it takes to publish a book, the higher the costs; furthermore, the books that require longer time or preparation usually belong to the symbolic sphere, therefore, if ever they have commercial success, it most often occurs on the long-run. "Cancelling a respectable project if it does not promise a fast return is the easiest road to take" (Rosen, 2003). The acceleration of rhythms of production thus leads to the progressive abandon of long-term intellectual projects. This refers to a conception of the profession of publisher that is discarded today. "Educating a future public would have meant planning in longer terms than the habits of thought of the modern business world are comfortable with" (Rosen, 2003). In the

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<sup>1</sup> According to Tomlison (1991: 175), this paradigm as presented in the theory of cultural imperialism is accompanied by the idea that the United States have planned this cultural expansion. This determinist perspective needs to be related to the context of emergence of this theory, that of Marxist criticism.

1980s, a group of French publishers took interest in Italian literature, some of which had a high symbolic success, because they believed in the intellectual necessity of providing it to the French public. Today, for all the reasons we exposed, this is more and more difficult and the recent publications tend to show the way to a uniformisation of literary taste.

The second manifestation of cultural homogenisation we want to tackle here is that of the despecialisation of publishers. The restructuration of the publishing houses often led to the creation of big departments of foreign literature, whose members usually have no specialisation at all, or are specialised in one foreign language (and culture) only. The head of these departments are chosen for their commercial competences rather than for their knowledge of a cultural sphere at all. In the United States, most publishing houses do not have a foreign literature department. There are a few publishers who have other functions but, once in a while, publish a foreign book. They seldom speak a foreign language and, in any case, this is not a requirement for being hired. *"Pour le français (la première langue traduite donc), chez Simon and Schuster, la seule francophone est l'éditrice chargée des livres de cuisine (en vérité, il y en a une autre, mais « elle a un poste trop important » et n'a donc pas le temps de lire), chez Pantheon, personne, et chez Doubleday la dernière qui parlait le français, c'était Jackie Kennedy »* (Levisalles, 2003). This despecialisation of publishers can be presented, on the one hand, as a direct consequence of the transformation of the structure of the book industry and, on the other, as increasing the distance between the commercial and the symbolic poles because the publishers are less and less in a position to consider foreign books in the socio-cultural and literary contexts of their culture of origin. *"Le problème n'est plus vraiment de voir des gestionnaires incultes remplacer les véritables éditeurs à la tête des entreprises d'édition ou de leurs filiales mais d'assister à des recompositions stratégiques dans lesquelles, pour la première fois, le contenant a plus d'importance que le contenu, le tuyau que le liquide qu'il transporte, la bouteille en verre que l'alcool précieux qu'elle est censée conserver. A ce stade, l'ignorance du patron chargé de publier des livres serait presque un gage contre sa tentation d'imposer une orientation intellectuelle à ses collections!"* (Mollier, 2002: 9).

The acceleration of the rhythms of production and the despecialisation of publishers participate in homogenising not only the supply, but also the demand of the public. In fact, because cultural products are created to touch a large international public, the expression of cultural differences tends to evaporate. In a way, this can have consequences on the evolution of cultural taste, which is homogenised. This is the view endorsed by those who denounce mass consumption of American products, especially among young people, whose education is more and more influenced by this homogenisation.

However, there are views that go against this approach to globalisation as homogenisation, or even Americanisation. The fact that people buy the same products all over the world (cultural but not only) does not necessarily mean that they are not receptive to other forms of culture. We have shown that the representations of Italy in France still play a role in the publication of Italian novels, even though in a lesser proportion. More generally, we can go beyond the Mickey Mouse approach to cultural globalisation and look both at the varieties of interpretation of cultural goods and at the possibility of appropriation of mass culture, as well as of its integration into a national patrimony. This dissertation did not focus on the issue of reception, but we assert it would be a prospect for continuation of the work. *"La réception sera en partie déterminée par les représentations de la culture d'origine et du statut (majoritaire ou minoritaire) de la langue. Les œuvres traduites peuvent être appropriées de façons diverses, et parfois contradictoires, en fonction des enjeux propres au champ intellectuel de réflexion."* (Heilbron, Sapiro, 2002: 5). Moreover, we can note that the evolution in the last centuries has always been towards an increasing cultural complexity and diversity, which could be paradoxical in regards to the claim of homogenisation. The local cultural production can thus also be envisaged as a deliberate expression of differences and singularity. This has always been the case, but in the actual international cultural context it is all the more important as the necessity of resisting to homogenisation has emerged within the cultural field. At the literary level, for instance, the symbolic pole has to gain visibility on the world book market, which implies envisaging literature within the world system. Paradoxically, in a world where communication is facilitated at many levels, cultural homogenisation is deeply enhanced by the ignorance of the decision-makers as regards the real issues at stake in literary production and diffusion. Levisalles (2003) quotes Jill Schoolman's (from the American publishing house Archipelago) in this respect: *"les Américains ne sont pas opposés à la littérature étrangère, simplement insuffisamment exposés... Ils ont un immense besoin de contacts avec les mouvements et les cercles littéraires au-delà de nos frontières... Nous n'avons jamais été aussi isolés du reste du monde. Nous vivons dans un empire qui préfère exporter plutôt qu'importer, qui a une écoute et une vision sélectives, même quand il s'agit d'art et de littérature. En cette époque inquiétante, c'est aux petites maisons d'édition indépendantes de créer un espace pour que la littérature soit présente dans les bibliothèques de ce pays"*.

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## Annexes

- Annexe 1: Data collection
- Annexe 2: About the UNESCO's *Index translationum*
- Annexe 3: The 33 publishers who published most Italian novels (1982-2001)
- Annexe 4: Camilleri and the question of translation



## ANNEXE 1: DATA COLLECTION

In the methodological part of the introduction, we focused on the nature of the sources and the way that we would use them. This section presents all of the steps in the collection of the various data: the corpus of books, the press files and the interviews.

### 1. The corpus of books and the statistics on translations

#### 1.1 Sources

1) The more exhaustive repertoire of published books is the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. they have a catalogue called the "BN Opale Plus", which is the complete list of all the books they have in storage. They also have another catalogue called "Bibliographie Nationale Française" that exists on a CD-Rom version for the books published since 1970. The only criterion used for the constitution of this bibliography is the *dépôt légal*, namely the obligation for each publisher to give the National Library four copies of any book that they publish.

Today, the *dépôt légal* in France is governed by the law of the 20th June 1992 (n.92-546) and the decree of application of the 31st December 1993 (n.93-1429).<sup>1</sup> It is organised in order to permit:

- the collection and conservation of all documents published, produced or distributed in France;
- the constitution and diffusion of national bibliographies;
- the consultation of documents, except if they are subject to secrecy acts.

Every publisher is obliged to deposit, for every book:

- four copies at the National Library
- one copy at the Ministry of Interior

Every printer is obliged to deposit, for every book:

- two copies at the National library if their residence is in Paris - Ile de France (or two in a local authorised library if their residence is outside Paris - Ile de France).

This is what is called "double-check system" (the copies must be deposited by both the publisher and the printer), that aims to reduce the number of books that are not deposited.

It is possible to make a multi-criteria search on the catalogue. In our case, it was possible to combine the date, original language and genre of the books. The search engine then displayed a list of all of the books corresponding to the criteria. This catalogue as such seems to be the best way of finding of all the novels translated from Italian into French each year, to the extent that it

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<sup>1</sup> See website of the French National Library, <http://www.bnf.fr/pages/zNavigat/frame/depotleg.htm>

offers the possibility of isolating them from all of the books published in France. The initial idea was to use it as a source for the analysis of the trends in translations. Unfortunately, this source is not reliable before the year 1991, as before this date the category 'original language' was not compulsory and it was often not filled up by the people in charge of referencing the books deposited. The multi-criteria search thus only provides a part of the books effectively translated, but it is impossible to know to which proportion it corresponds.<sup>1</sup> The category 'original language' was only systematically filled up from 1992 onwards. Consequently, it is impossible to use this data before the 1990s with regard to translations.

2) Every year since 1945, the UNESCO publishes the *Index Translationum*. This index references all of the translations, for all languages. They are classified by original language, country of publication, language of translation, author, publisher, genre<sup>2</sup>, and date. At the beginning, it was only edited on a paper version, however, it has recently been transferred into a CD-Rom. Unfortunately, the electronic version starts in 1979 only.

The main problem of this Index is that it presents the same incoherence as the French National Bibliography for the pre-1991 period. The reason is very simple. UNESCO receives its information from the *dépôt légal* service of the BNF, and the *Index* contains even more mistakes because it does not take into account the real date of publication, but instead the 'reference date'. For instance, if a book is published at the end of 1984, it will figure on the BNF list of 1985 (even though it is written that 1984 is the date of publication) but it will generally be classified under 1985 in the UNESCO *Index*. This source can be useful to draw general trends in the absence of other sources but to the extent that it was possible we chose not to use it.<sup>3</sup>

3) Danièle Valin's bibliography (Valin, 2002),

Danièle Valin's bibliography is meant to be as exhaustive as possible, as her aim was to create a tool to assist researchers working on Italy. She used various sources:

- *Un an de nouveautés*, Paris, Les éditions professionnelles, 1900-1984;
- *Bibliographie. Refontes annuelles du bulletin mensuel des ouvrages en langue française parus dans le monde entier*, Paris, Messagerie Hachette, 1934-1970;
- *Le livre italien traduit en français et publié en France 1945-1969*, Paris, Institut Culturel Italien, 1970.

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<sup>1</sup> This leads to very strange results: for instance, 2 books translated from Italian into French in 1986, around 20 from English!

<sup>2</sup> However, this classification only uses the first level of the Universal Decimal Classification, contrari to the National Bibliographies.

<sup>3</sup> I will use the 2003 updated electronic version for the description of the trends in translations from and into various languages, though.

- *Le livre de l'année, bibliographie des ouvrages en langue française parus dans le monde entier*, Paris, le Cercle de la librairie, 1979-1979;

- *Livres Hebdo, Les livres de la semaine*, Paris, Editions les professionnels du livre, 1980-1990.

This work is the most recent from the range of bibliographies of Italian books translated into French that have been published, and thus the most up to date. It is organised by genre: poetry / theatre / detective novels / novels, short stories and essays. This last category includes children literature.

We chose to extract the corpus from the French National Bibliography, for two reasons. Firstly, there is a recent CD-Rom version which is a useful tool as it allows to extract books by combining several criteria, such as original language if it is a translation, category (literature, science...), and date. This type of research is usually impossible on other catalogues (such as the BN Opale Plus) because the books cannot be listed by original language. Secondly, the criteria of *dépôt légal* allows us to assume that a large majority of the books published will be on the list.<sup>1</sup> When we began this work, Danièle Valin had already published a bibliography (Valin, 1991), but it only went up to 1990. She published an updated version in 2002, which had a great impact on our research. We stucked to the choice of *dépôt légal* as the main criterion, however, with the arrival of Valin's work, it gave an opportunity to verify and enrich our own data.

Apart from the construction of the corpus, these sources were used for other purposes. Firstly, in order to understand the mechanisms of diffusion of Italian literature in France in the end of the twentieth century, we need to look at the trends in translations from a historical perspective. To this end, Valin's bibliography is a useful tool since it covers the whole century. On the whole, it is quite reliable, as she used crossed sources, and the number of books published is rather small (and thus easier to control). We thus used her bibliography as a unique source to describe the trends in translations throughout the Twentieth century. With regard to the 1990s, two sources were at our disposal, Valin and the National Bibliography, that were used comparatively.

Secondly, UNESCO's data was used in a comparative perspective, in order to deal with the translations into French from various languages and those from Italian into the same languages. As regards the former, it is impossible to begin earlier than the 1990s as the statistics are taken from the National Bibliography, and thus are not reliable beforehand. Conversely, it is possible to start earlier for the latter, if we assume that the Italian National Library was more accurate in

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there is only one difference with the BN Opale Plus catalogue: the latter includes the books given to the Library and not submitted to the *dépôt légal* obligation. This is usually the case for rare editions of ancient books, and it is of a rather limited importance in the case of Italian literature in the 1990s.

furnishing data to the UNESCO. However, since the aim is to compare all of these trends, we have chosen to start all of the analyses at the same time, namely at the beginning of the 1990s.

### ***1.2 Definition of the period***

Initially, as we only had the National Bibliography data at our disposal, we were limited by its problem of reliability before 1992 and by the fact that the bibliography had not yet been updated after 2000. Therefore, we decided to look at the period 1992-2000, which is justified by the questions of reliability mentioned above. Following this, when Valin published her updated bibliography (Valin, 2002), we considered using it instead of the National Bibliography as main source. In the end, we used both, which gave us more freedom as regards the choice of the period. We had also started the interviews at that time, which gave us a clearer idea of the most interesting period of in-depth study. We chose to start in 1982. Firstly, it roughly corresponded to the beginning of the quantitative increase in the publication of Italian novels in France. Secondly, it is the date of publication of Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose* in France. Publishers, translators and italianists in general often mention this event as the founding of an Italian wave in France. It is thus interesting to analyse the trends in the publications from 1982 onwards.

With regard to the end of the period, we chose to stop in 2001, for two reasons. Firstly, because it is likely that the data are not yet updated for 2002 and 2003. Secondly, the publications of Italian novels in 2002 were high because the Paris Book Fair (Italy was guest of honour): many re-editions were planned for the beginning of 2002, as well as publications of contemporary novels, and were released just before the fair.

### ***1.3 Procedure: the construction of the corpus***

We first extracted the books between 1992 and 2000 from the National Bibliography, using the criteria " 'original language=Italian'; CDU=823 and 824'; 'date=1992-2000' ”.

"CDU" refers to the Universal Decimal Classification used by most libraries to classify the books. The category 8.23 includes all of the novels, short stories, fairy-tales and children literature. 8.24 include essays, varia, humour and discourse. The choice of including the latter was not obvious, however the classification was too ambiguous and it could not be used without cautions. For instance, because they contain some reflections on Italian society, some novels are classified as "essays" (for instance, *Alzaia*, by Erri de Luca, published by Rivages in 1998). Overall, the idea of this corpus is to collect the literary books that could be defined as narrative and fiction. They can have a historical basis and they can use different genres of narration (for example, *Comment voyager avec un saumon*, by Umberto Eco, and *Va où ton cœur te porte*, by Susanna Tamaro, are two narrative



books, even though of a very different kind). One can also think in terms of exclusion as the narrative criteria excludes theatre and poetry. The fiction category excludes works in human sciences. Of course, the borders are not always easy to set, but as we needed a systematic approach, we decided that it was better to include some philosophical novels rather than to exclude *a priori* some novels because they were somehow historical.

We inserted all of the books in a table with the following specifications: author, French title, translator, publisher, collection, date, place, author of the preface (when there is one) and price. After various checks and controls (mainly thanks to the on-line publishers catalogues), we obtained a list of 761 books.<sup>1</sup>

This first step was done before the publication of the updated version of Valin's bibliography. We then included the years 1982-1991 and 2001.<sup>2</sup> The information available was similar: author, title, publisher, collection, translator, author of the preface and date. As explained above, there are a few differences as regards the period 1992-2000, which is why we chose to combine the two sources for these years.

In total, 1550 Italian narrative fictions were published in France between 1982 and 2001.

#### ***1.4 Reliability of the data***

Neither of the two sources that we used are exhaustive. The comprehensiveness of the National Bibliography relies on the publishers' will to respect the legal deposit obligation and the possible delays in their deposition. Even though this has been considerably improved by the introduction of a new checking system, we cannot assume that it is hundred per cent reliable. We assumed, however, that the choice of the *dépôt légal* - an official criteria related to an official institution, the national library - allows to reduce incoherencies. Furthermore, the data was entered manually on the National Library database, which unavoidably leads to mistakes. As regards Valin's bibliography, the human factor has to be taken into account as well despite the multiplicity of sources. We can assume, though, that the second edition of her work is more reliable than the first one since people signal her the books forgotten and the errors. This is becoming a collective work, the completeness of which will be improved in the next years. Finally, the simple fact that the data was entered manually on an Excel database leads to mistakes and lacunae. It is therefore impossible to pretend to be exhaustive in the creation of such a corpus. There are always

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<sup>1</sup> They were 1196 on the National bibliography, but we entered only 1114 titles because we ignored all the references for which at least two of the three following fields author-title-publisher were missing. We then excluded children literature, comics and a few theatre plays that were in the wrong category. We got a list of 817 books.

<sup>2</sup> Danièle Valin was kind enough to give us an electronic version of her work. We then had to convert her Word file into an Excel database in order to be able to sort the data.

mistakes related to problems in the constitution of catalogues themselves, to the non-respect of the law by the publishers, or simply to the manual insertion of the data.

At the beginning of this work, we made some verifications using the catalogues of various publishers for the period 1992-2000.<sup>1</sup> In fact, there is a change in the way of controlling the effective respect of the *dépôt légal* obligation from 1992 onwards. This point was clarified thanks to a meeting with the person responsible for the issues related to the *dépôt légal* at the National Library. We saw above that both the publisher and the printer are obliged to give the National Library a certain number of copies of any edited book (respectively 4 and 2). From 1992 onwards, a system of control was in place, involving the cross checking of the publishers and the printers lists. The aim was to reduce the number of books "accidentally" not deposited by the publishers. As far as small publishers are concerned, when an expensive book was published, the obligation to give four copies represented a high cost. In these cases some arrangements have been made, but this does not concern our research as the books we were dealing with rarely cost more than 170 French Francs. The system was also created to transform a theoretical duty into an effective obligation. This system apparently worked and my case study is an example of its efficiency.

We can also mention the fact that sometimes it is a question of date. For example, a book that does not appear in 2000 may appear in 2001, even if its publication date was 2000 anyway. The person in charge of the *dépôt légal* claimed that for the best period, namely since 1995, it is almost impossible to have a complete catalogue for the previous year before April of the following year. This helps to explain the amount of differences between the publishers' catalogues and the national bibliography. Naturally, the mistakes often come from the publishers themselves, as they have no obligation to present an exhaustive catalogue. Finally, we shall consider the question of the re-editions. There is no *dépôt légal* obligation for the re-printing of a book that has already been edited and published. However, this does not include the different

<sup>1</sup> We checked 39 publishers out of 101, representing 317 titles out of 726 (this is for the period 1990-2000 and only the category 823). We used their on-line catalogues, available directly on their web site, sometimes provided with an entry 'Italian literature'. When it was not the case we checked manually year by year. All the publishers are not represented because not all of them have on-line catalogues. From these 317 titles, 296 stand both on the National Bibliography and on the publisher's catalogue; 21 are referenced by the National Bibliography but not on the catalogue. A probable explanation is that these books are now out of print and are thus no longer on the catalogue. Then, 96 books are referenced by the publisher but not by the National Library. The annual distribution is as follows:

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
6	6	7	3	3	7	9	5	8

In percentage of the total number of books for this category, the distribution is the following:

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
8.5	7.3	7.9	3.0	2.8	6.8	8.4	3.8	5.9

Compared with 63.9% and 20.1% respectively for 1990 and 1991, we assume that the number of mistakes for 1992-2000 can be considered as marginal (we do not really have any other option).

editions of the same book by the same publisher, for instance in a different format. In reality, it seems that when the same publisher publishes the same book twice it is often deposited only once.

## 2. The press files

Five authors were chosen and we used the press files of each of their books released in France in order to analyse their reception in the media. This was meant to be an illustration of the results shown in the previous chapters.

### 2.1 Sampling

We initially planned to select five authors who had very different characteristics according to specific criteria including: age, national success, international success, number of books, background (genre) and region. Furthermore, it was pointless to choose an author that had no success in France as there would then be no reviews of their books in the newspapers. Also, it seemed interesting to deal with all of the books of a few author rather than selecting books randomly. This allows us to consider "individual careers", from a more biographical perspective.

The following case studies were chosen:

- Umberto Eco: he is the most widely translated Italian author since the beginning of the 1980s.
- Antonio Tabucchi: one of the authors who came to be known in the 1980s after the success of the *Name of the Rose*. Since then, each of his books has been translated into French. He belongs to a different generation than Eco, which appeared on the scene in the 1980s.
- Erri De Luca: he belongs to the following generation, that was first translated at the beginning of the 1990s. He has had a very high critical success since then and all of his books have been published in France.
- Andrea Camilleri: in terms of age, he is close to Eco, but he only began to write novels at the beginning of the 1990s. In this respect he is at the border between De Luca's generation and the 'young generation', that of the Italian writers who publish since the middle of the 1990s. He mostly writes detective novels, genre that has developed in Italy occurred recently (as opposed to French or Anglo-Saxon literature). Camilleri is one of the writers of detective stories who is most successful in France. Moreover, his books contain many references to Sicily (his native land), which is interesting in the light of the rise of "regional literature" in Italy.
- Carlo Lucarelli belongs to the 'young generation' and also writes detective stories. The reception of his novels was analysed as an example of part of the group of young *polar* writers who have been quite successful in France since the middle of the 1990s.

## 2.2 Collecting data

The press files of any author's books are supposed to be kept by their publisher. This was the case for Antonio Tabucchi, and a few days were spent in the publisher's archive room going through the material. Umberto Eco's publisher only had the press files of the books released since 1991. For the previous period, unfortunately, hardly any data could be found.<sup>1</sup> Erri De Luca's publisher had a complete archive but refused to provide us access to the material. Instead, they sent us a sample of copied article which was not exhaustive and was treated as such.<sup>2</sup> As far as Camilleri and Lucarelli are concerned, the *Bibliothèque des Littératures Policières* have all the press files (as for all of the detective novels released in France). Moreover, the special issues of various journals and magazines such as *Magazine Littéraire*, *Lire* or *La Quinzaine littéraire* offered complementary information. Overall, the material is unfortunately not exhaustive. Initially, a very systematic quantitative analysis of the press files had been planned, however, as this was not possible, the data was used from the perspective of showing how the way these books were received in the French media.

Apart from the analysis of the press files, we also compared the dates of publication of the books of these authors in several countries (Italy, France, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States). In the beginning we mostly used the *Index Translationum*, but it was often incomplete and it quickly appeared that other sources were needed. We used national sources such as the British Library catalogue, the Spanish Catalogo, the French BN Opale Plus catalogue of the National Library and the Italian index Alice. For the latest publications, the various national editions of Amazon were also useful. None of these sources are exhaustive. Overall, the collection of the dates of publication was a bit of a difficult work, and is thus probably not totally reliable, but the confrontation of different sources offers guarantees that the dates are correct. It is possible that none of the sources mentions a certain book, for instance because it is out of print or because the publisher has not yet declared it.

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<sup>1</sup> We asked his publisher, his translators, the Italian cultural centres in Paris, even his Italian publisher. However, no one had kept record of the press files regarding his first books. We thus considered the alternatives and decided to go through the electronic archives of *Le Monde* and *Libération*. There were problems as well, as the articles could not always be identified by date (we systematically scanned the editions of the months following the publications of Eco's books). On the whole, we only managed to access a few articles (see chapter seven).

<sup>2</sup> Erri De Luca changed publishers for his last book, and the first one was not happy with this (he went to one of the most prestigious publishers). When I asked them the press files, I could sense this anger as they told me to go to the new publisher, saying they would probably be very happy to help me. This can be interpreted as a sign of their disappointment.

### 3. The interviews

#### *3.1 Sampling: who to interview?*

As presented in the introduction, the aim of the interviews was to discover the interviewees' *stories*, which consist of the way they present their experience regarding the publication of Italian novels in France. To the extent that we are not conducting a systematic content analysis, the issue of sampling does not need to respond to the criterion of representativity, or at least not in the way that it is defined in quantitative social sciences. The interviews are representative through their singularity. The information is valid in a certain context.

How were the actors in the introduction of Italian literature in France identified? When dealing with representations, researchers often face the problem of the absence of limits: for instance, if we were looking at the general representations of Italy in France, how would we define whom we should interview? In fact, potentially, anyone in the street could be an interviewee. The question of sampling would thus be complex. Conversely, if we were working on the presentation of Italian literature in the various Italian cultural institutes in France, we would know exactly how many of these institutes existed and it would be easy to identify who the people to interview in each of them are. We could thus interview all of the people who are directly involved in the process we would be dealing with. In our case, there is no limited set of potential interviewees, nor is there the possibility of choosing between the usual forms of sampling. We had a good idea of how many publishers were involved between 1982 and 2001 (there are 184), and also for the translators (about 400). It would have been impossible and, above all unnecessary, to interview all of them: why should we collect over 500 stories as 30 was enough? Moreover, there is also a practical issue involved: if a publisher edited one Italian novel in, 1986, for instance, the chances that the person who was in charge of it is still in the same job are quite low.

The first decision concerned the choice of the interviewees. The direct who were directly involved in the introduction of Italian literature in France are the publishers, the translators, the heads of collections, and to a certain extent, the agents.<sup>1</sup> The indirect actors are the readers for publishing houses, academics, journalists, members of Italian cultural institutions or of Italian book shops in France.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, we decided not to interview any agents, as they are involved only since a few years, and as this remains a marginal practice for Italian writers, who are usually represented by their publisher. Likewise, they only deal with the negotiation of the rights, which is not relevant as such in our perspective (but can be interesting when presented in the context of interviews with other kinds of actors, of course).

<sup>2</sup> It is important to remember that they often belong to at least two or three categories at the same time.

In chapter 4, we looked at the number of publications by publisher and translator. It was found that twenty-four translators translated at least ten books over the whole period, in average one every other year. Therefore, we aimed to interview a few of the "biggest" ones (especially if they also worked as heads of collection, readers for a publisher or academics), because we assumed they would have stories to tell. However, it was also useful to meet a few "small" ones, because this would include young translators starting their careers, because they happened to translate a book due to their (personal) relationships with certain actors of the field, or simply because of the fact that they only had a few experiences, which would encourage them to speak more in details. The situation is the same for the publishers, as thirty-three of them accounted for almost three quarters of the corpus.

Contacting people was one of the most difficult steps of the fieldwork. We first aimed to meet a few translators and publishers who belonged to the "middle category", neither very important ones nor very small ones. By chance, a few of them accepted to meet me, and they gave me suggestions of other persons who would be interesting to meet. From then onwards, we almost only contacted people on the behalf of someone else. This was crucial in our case as we had in meeting the interviewees.<sup>1</sup> The mention of a colleague's name in the letter sent to them made a real difference: they often accepted the interview out of politeness or esteem for the colleague, or simply because they wanted their "opinion" to be taken into account in this research (because they knew their colleague's opinion would be included).

We first carried out a series of five interviews, reworked on the interview scheme and started a second series three months later. The time was limited as our base was in Florence and most of the interviewees were in Paris. The interviews took place during short stays of one or two weeks (in total five stays). The advantage of this technique was that between two sessions, we were able to reformulate the guideline. At some point, as we had the feeling that we had reached some kind of saturation, we stopped doing interviews. In fact, we had already met or tried to meet all the people we were advised to contact. In addition, we also began to sense many of the features of the stories being repeated throughout the interviews and it would not have been beneficial to collect redundant material.

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<sup>1</sup> The publishers especially are very difficult to contact as they belong (or define themselves as belonging) to a very busy category of intellectuals who have no time to lose. The fact was of course that I was asking them a bit of their time and not offering anything in return (not even the reward of being the subject of a newspaper article, as I was not even a journalist!).

In total, we interviewed 32 people (20 men and 12 women), who belonged to the following categories (almost all of them were either publishers/head of collection or translators):

Publishers	12 (6 men / 6 women)
Heads of collection	9 (9 men)
Translators	15 (9 men / 6 women)
Journalists/Critics	8
Readers for publishing houses	6
Academics	9
Members of cultural institution	2

A list of the interviewees (the order is chronological)<sup>1</sup> is presented above. In italics, the reference "specialist" or "non-specialist" distinguishes those who have specific competence regarding Italian literature.<sup>2</sup>

1. Sylvain Renucci: translator (between 25 and 30 books), head of a collection, reader for two publishers, *specialist*.
2. Georges Cohen: publisher (between 20 and 30 books), *non-specialist*.
3. Thierry Durel: publisher (between 20 and 30 books), *non-specialist*.
4. Robert Darlignac: translator (over 40 books), head of collection for an important publisher, journalist, *specialist*.
5. Marc Guglielmi: academic, translator (between 15 and 20 books), head of collection, reader for two publishers, *specialist*.
6. Gérard Laplace: translator (less than 3 books), head of collection for an important publisher, journalist, *specialist*.
7. Myriam Couratier: publisher (over 40 books), *non-specialist*.
8. Charles Chevallier: publisher (over 40 books), *non-specialist*.
9. Danièle Perrineau: translator (between 5 and 10 books), academic, journalist, *specialist*.
10. Delphine Vasseur: translator (between 15 and 20 books), academic, reader, *specialist*.
11. Carlo Baldini: member of an Italian cultural institution, *specialist*.
12. Anna Moresco: publisher (between 15 and 20 books), *non-specialist*.
13. Jean-Philippe Bianchi: translator (between 10 and 15 books), head of collection for a small publisher, critic, *specialist*.
14. Marianne Grange: publisher (between 15 and 20 books), *non-specialist*.
15. Henri Jouvenet: translator (between 15 and 20 books), academic, journalist, head of a collection, *specialist*.
16. Sandra Di Maggio: academic, critic, *specialist*.
17. Myreille Jacob: translator (between 10 and 15 books), academic, *specialist*.
18. Michel Lombard: head of collection for an important publisher, *non-specialist*.

<sup>1</sup> The names are false for confidentiality reasons and the information on the number of books translated deliberately vague. However, we kept the same gender and nationality for the interviewees (to the extent that French and Italian names are easily identifiable).

<sup>2</sup> This distinction is often used in the dissertation, hence the necessity of specifying it. By definition all translators are specialists, except one who translated only one book and is not planning to go on. In total, 18 interviewees out of 32 are specialised in Italian literature.

19. Marie-Pierre Leborgne: academic, *specialist*.
20. Irène Thibaud: translator (between 5 and 10 books), academic, *specialist*.
21. Thomas Dupasquier: head of collection for an important publisher, *non-specialist*.
22. Yves Tessarin: publisher (between 10 and 15 books), *non-specialist*.
23. Jean-Pierre Romano: translator (between 5 and 10 books), academic, critic, *specialist*.
24. Laure Fougère: translator (between 30 and 35 books), reader for two publishers, *specialist*.
25. Guido Pierucci: publisher (between 25 and 30 books), *non-specialist*.
26. Jérôme Dupuy: publisher (less than 3 books), *non-specialist*.
27. Claude Muccino: translator (between 30 and 40 books), head of collection for a small publisher, reader, *specialist*.
28. Monique Desmottiers: publisher (between 15 and 20 books), *non-specialist*.
29. Paul de Verdalle: translator (between 10 and 15 books, reader, critic, *specialist*.
30. Claudine Plessier: publisher (over 40 books), *non-specialist*.
31. Damien Leclerc: translator (less than 3 books), *non-specialist*.
32. Jean-Charles Zilio: translator (between 20 and 25 books), member of cultural institution, critic, *specialist*.

### 3.2 Contacting the interviewees

When the selection of the first people to contact was made, a standard letter was written which briefly introduced the subject of this research, asked them to meet us for an interview and said we would call them after a few days to set a time and place. This could appear as very procedural (especially to Anglo-Saxons), however, in France this process increases the chances of receiving a positive response and it avoids the risk to offend someone by being too informal.<sup>1</sup>

Ten publishers were selected at the beginning, only we were only able to obtain interviews with four of them. The others were either uncontactable (two of them) or not willing to meet us. The tone they used was surprisingly very incisive. Naturally, they were not expected to tell us how delighted they would be to satisfy our request, however, their behaviour did not fit with the typical French way of interacting. This can be interpreted as an evidence of the existence of specific rules pertaining to the Parisian publishing world. This world is described by Hamon and Rotman (1981) as extremely closed. Among the people who belong to it, the information circulate very fluidly and very quickly, but the borders with the outside world are very well defended. Our position was also quite unusual as the request was not from a journalist asking for an interview nor a student asking for a *stage*, which are the requests publishers usually receive. Hence, there were clear difficulties in entering this world. However, as soon as I had met a few

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<sup>1</sup> It should also be mentioned that I had no idea about the age of the people, and again I did not want to take the risk to be too direct to someone belonging to the older generation (born before the war). Conversely, there was a situation in which I wrote a very formal letter to a translator and then found out he was about my age. It felt useless afterwards but he didn't seem too surprised. The following anecdote clearly illustrates this formal aspect of relationships: I wanted to contact the head of a cultural institution as I knew he had been working as a publisher and was interested in literature. I had been working for that institution a few years before (my interviewee was not there at this time) and I was still in touch with one of the members. I asked her if she thought I should call directly or write a letter. She told me he would not answer the phone, even if I mentioned her name, and that I had to write a letter, and to write it by hand because he was not very keen on computers and this would increase my chances of meeting him! This is an unusual example but it says a lot on French conventions in this respect.



people, things became much easier, however, they staid quite procedural as a formal letter was always sent before calling, even when we had a "recommendation". During the meetings we often had the feeling this had been unnecessary and that I could called them directly; but there were also people who would not have received me if without the formal procedure.

Contacting the translators was easier. They were quite willing to meet us as most of them complained that little attention was paid to their profession, that they work alone and that they get no reward for the huge amount of work that they produce. They even answered to our request warmly. The academics also reacted quite positively, probably because they considered us as a future colleague. They were intrigued by this "European University Institute" and asked a lot about it: the fact of belonging to an institution outside the French system helped us to keep the necessary distance.

### *3.3 The interview: a social interaction*

This section aims to explain the various biases that characterised the interviews. Of course, they are not homogeneous, since the interviewees were men and women of all ages, but some trends can be drawn by categories. We will distinguish the publishers (including the heads of collection when their main activity is not translation) and the translators.<sup>1</sup> We aim to show that all of the interviews, as with any social interactions, cannot be devoid of intrinsic dynamics, logics or features that orientate the discourse. The word "bias" implies a negative connotation, but here we shall simply describe these "biases" and the strategies used to face them, rather than consider how they could have been avoided.

During in many interviews, the constant opposition with the academic world was striking. The publishers and translators who do not have high academic degrees tended to show some kind of contempt for academics. The position as a PhD student was sometimes interpreted as part of the "rival camp", and we thus had to find ways to reduce the social distance that the interviewees would establish in the first place. This could be interpreted as a reaction to a representation that is quite common in the academic world: that of the publishers as "commercial". By definition, the academic world is detached from any commercial goal, and academics thus tend to look at publishers as book sellers, whereas some members of the publishing world define their work as literary rather than commercial.<sup>2</sup> The publishers are aware of this attitude and it contributes to the creation of the social distance mentioned above.

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<sup>1</sup> The etiquette attributed to the interviewee corresponds to his or her main occupation (the one listed first in the above inventory).

<sup>2</sup> Especially through the idea of "discovery" of talents, see chapter 5, section "Personal discovery".

### *The publishers*

Most interviews were conducted in the publisher's office, except for three of them (two took place in a café and one on the phone). All of the publishers were based in Paris, except one that we interviewed in Lyon and one based in the south of France but who comes to Paris once a week together with three colleagues (the meeting took place in a café as they only have a small office in Paris). The publishers' office was the most obvious place to choose, however, it created a few difficulties. Firstly, the phone sometimes continued to ring. Most of them had a secretary and none of them had asked her not to pass them the phone calls before the interview. In some cases, after a couple of interruptions, the interviewee took the initiative of asking her to filter the calls, and they ceased to be passed through. One of them asked the person who was calling her to hold the line and told me that she could not go on with the interview as we had started very late (we had already waited for over an hour) and that she had a lot of work to do.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, the fact of sitting in the interviewee's office did not help to overtake the situation of domination that was intrinsic to the social characteristics of the two people interacting. The publishers in Paris are almost all situated in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements*, which are the historical places of intellectual life and presently two of the most expensive districts in the capital. These publishers have a great deal of cultural and social capital.<sup>2</sup> The ones with offices in different areas of the city are usually diffused and distributed by big financial groups such as Hachette (for instance, Albin Michel, which is in the 14<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*) or Vivendi Universal Publishing, whose offices are in the 13<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. They thus do not have the same type of cultural and social capital as the other publishers.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, we usually interviewed one of the people who was high on the scale of hierarchy in the publishing house. Finally, we should make a distinction between male and female interviewees. When female publishers were interviewed, it was often felt that they were trying to introduce some kind of domination based on a power relationships. This pertains to the fact that these women have usually fought hard to reach their position in the field,<sup>4</sup> and defend it quite ardently. The fact that the interviewer was also a woman (and younger) somehow created the position of a potential rival, and this was heightened by belonging to the academic world. They reacted by saying that they had fought hard, and that it is tough for a

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<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, this interview had not been the easiest of all so far, and I had the feeling that she took that phone call as a pretext to put an end to an unpleasant situation.

<sup>2</sup> Social capital is defined as "*l'ensemble des ressources actuelles ou potentielles qui sont liées à la possession d'un réseau durable de relations plus ou moins institutionnalisées d'interconnaissance et d'inter-reconnaissance*" (Bourdieu, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> See chapter 4 for description of the field of publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Most of them actually took a few minutes at the beginning of the interview to explain how they had built their own publishing house and how the gender issue is present in the publishing world.

woman, and that the *savoir-faire* required is not taught anywhere, especially not at university. This was interpreted as a way of defining their territory, and after that the interview could start more smoothly, even though some of them remained on the defensive throughout. Our strategy aimed to give signs of empathy, in order to show them acceptance of the terms of the contract, so to say. It was not rivalry, but instead a PhD student interviewing them as experts in a field.

With the male interviewees, the situation was radically different and in many respects, more complex. For some of them, the situation of domination was very clear, especially when they were over 45-50 years old. The interviewer was the young student and they were experienced experts, and the gender dimension was also present. In these cases, the opposite strategy was used in comparison to the one presented above, as from the beginning we tried to show them that we already had lot of information and we were looking for "advanced" information, and mostly for their perspective on the issue. It was a subtle line to define, as we did not want to interrupt them. As the time issue was quite constraining, we had to find a middle ground between stopping them from wasting my precious time (the risk being that they would be offended and that some of the interesting pieces of information would be lost) and letting them speak (most probably at the detriment of some issues that we wanted to deal with). The underlying idea of this strategy was to reduce the social distance between the interviewee and the interviewer.<sup>1</sup>

#### *The translators*

Most interviews were conducted at the interviewee's home or in a café. Three of them took place at a university, if they were also academics. Two of them had no proper office, therefore we either sat in the cafeteria or in the professor's room. The translators, by definition, have no office, unless translation is not their main activity. When we called them to arrange a meeting, they usually invited us to come to their home, mainly to avoid wasting time in going outside. Otherwise, they chose a café in an area that was convenient for them, sometimes it was their usual café for this kind of meetings. We made it seen that we were mobile and flexible because all of them said to be very busy and we often had trouble finding a moment (I was never in Paris for a very long time, which did not help).

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<sup>1</sup> Another point, more problematic, should be mentioned, the fact that some of the male interviewees introduced a dimension of seduction in the interaction. It was never (except once) direct, but while I was emphasizing the fact that the interaction was between a sociology researcher and a publisher they would bring it back to the gender level (the interaction was between a man and a younger woman). Consequently, I was not feeling completely at ease with the situation, and thus avoided insisting on my interest for their personal experience as publishers rather than on more general issues on the diffusion of Italian literature in France. Sometimes, we could have gone on with questions on the personal "stories" they would tell, including many biographical elements, however this often had to be cut short as it would have been a way of putting myself at the level of interaction that they wanted to establish and that had to be avoided.

Overall, the situation of domination situation was less evident in comparison to the publishers and it depended greatly on the position of the translator in the field. Those who were very experienced and had translated significant numbers of books were more self confident (they were usually the ones who worked as readers for publishers) and tended to behave like the publishers. This was emphasized by the fact that the relationship between translators and the academic world is rather complex. Some of the translators are academics themselves, and the others define themselves in opposition to what they call the "old school". For instance, they denounce the way translation techniques are taught at the university, and claim that practice is the only way to learn how to translate a literary text. With the translators-academics, the interaction was easier as they perceived us as part of their world. They sometimes established a kind of connivance, which often allowed us to inquire further into their personal experience. With the others, it was not as difficult as anticipated because, surprisingly, they did not seem to associate us with the world they were criticizing. A few times, they apologized *a posteriori* for having done so, because, they said, they had not realised that the interviewer was part of the academic world.

The main difficulty that faced during the interviews with translators had to do with empathy, which is one of the main issues when dealing with personal experiences.<sup>1</sup> In several cases, the interviewee found it difficult to work as a translator because they suffered from loneliness, and they felt that the publishers for whom they worked tended to underestimate their work. For instance, they are often underpaid, their name does not always appear on the book cover and they are not always told when the book is released.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the relationships with the authors can often be very difficult, since the translators often have to solicit information from them (to ask for clarifications on references in the text, for instance) and they are not always available and welcoming. Overall, many translators presented their work as under-valued by the authors, the translators and the critique. They complained quite a lot and expected us to show sympathy. The risk was that the interview would turn into a conversation about how difficult it is to be a translator nowadays. The strategy used was to show some empathy (the contrary would have been rude) and to use it as a springboard to switch to the issues of the research. For instance, we would ask them if the situation was as difficult at the beginning of the 1980s, and they would then start to speak about that period.

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<sup>1</sup> Not that my questions were extremely personal, but in the case of translators we discussed, for instance, their relations with the publishers, which are usually very complex and seemed to be a painful topic.

<sup>2</sup> At the occasion of the Paris Book Fair in 2002 where Italy was the guest country, the *Magazine Littéraire* published a special issue on to Italian literature. There was a 20 pages dossier without name of any translator. This was mentioned to me by 6 translators as a striking example of the attitude of the media towards their profession.

### 3.4 transcription

We chose to transcribe all of the thirty-two interviews literally. This was a large amount of work, but it was necessary as we wanted to work on the discourse logic and the use of words. We also decided to include the silences, hesitations and other kinds of emotions in the transcription, because they can be useful to understand the importance of a statement, or the degree of confidentiality of information, for instance.<sup>1</sup> The following is an extract from an interview with a publisher.

*Je vois. Est-ce que vous pourriez me définir les critères selon lesquels vous choisissez de publier un livre plutôt qu'un autre?*

Bon, maintenant... ça a changé, pour moi, dans ma tête, avec le développement de la maison. Je préfère publier des auteurs vivants. Et, en vieillissant, je trouve que c'est plus intéressant de faire des jeunes. [rises] Je crois... disons, les grands ancêtres, c'est bien, mais je pense qu'il est beaucoup plus intéressant de découvrir des gens.

We can see from this short abstract that she answers the question in comparison to a previous period ("maintenant", "ça a changé"). The fact of transcribing the first silence, for instance, helps to point out this link. Moreover, when she laughs after the allusion to her age, it is obviously a way of minimising the importance of what she is saying, which is interesting in order to bring into light the potential situation of domination (hence the importance of the age of the interviewee).

In the dissertation, the interviews are quoted in French, for two reasons. Firstly, it would be a lot of work to translate all of them into English. Secondly, the use of words in French and English could be very different. For instance, the use of formal expressions would sound very strange in English, whereas it is completely normal in French. Furthermore, the Latin languages are more inclined to deal with feelings, whereas it could appear as unusual to the English speaking reader in the case of a translation.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, in case the interviewee was going very much into details for a story that may not have been quoted at all, I did not transcribe everything but wrote down the moment of the interview so that I could find it immediately if needed while working on the text.



## ANNEXE 2: ABOUT THE UNESCO'S *INDEX TRANSLATIONUM*

As we saw in the dissertation, there are several problems pertaining to the exhaustiveness and the reliability of the data contained in the UNESCO's *Index Translationum*. Here, we will look at the way this data is constructed in order to understand where this imprecision comes from. Furthermore, this development will provide answers to a question that underlies all the statistical analysis carried on in Chapter One: why does it start in 1988? Two sources will be used: the UNESCO website ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)) and an interview conducted with the person in charge of the *Index* in November 2001.

### Social construction of book statistics

The *Index Translationum* is based on data furnished by each of the 184 countries who participate to it. There are national commissions that play the role of intermediaries between the UNESCO and the competent body within each country. Every year, a circular letter is sent to all of these bodies (most of the time from National libraries) via these national commissions, asking them to send the list of all of the translations published in the country. The letter specifies that for each book the following information should be available: author, title (original and translated), publisher, translator, category,<sup>1</sup> original language, language of translation and country of publication. In reality, several of the fields may remain unfilled, however, if it is anyway identifiable, the book is present on the list.

This information was provided by the person responsible for the *Index* at the UNESCO. We immediately asked for more detail about the national commissions that she was referring to, such as do they meet only for this occasion? how many people are on each commission? who are the members? do the commissions have a physical place (i.e. an office) at the UNESCO or in each country? Surprisingly, she remained extremely vague (saying constantly: "it depends") and refused to give me more precise information. This raises two issues: firstly, that of the existence of blurs as regards the construction of these data. For instance, it is difficult to know the exact weight of the UNESCO's members themselves in the classification of the books: for instance, do they check/modify the classifications furnished by the national organisms? On the whole, it is difficult to know exactly who does what. The second issue is a direct consequence of the first one, and pertains to the intrinsic reliability of the *Index*. There is no clear definition of who does what and how, and we can thus assume that the errors (omissions, mistakes) are potentially more

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<sup>1</sup> There are 10 categories that correspond to the first subdivision of the Universal Decimal Classification, see Chapter 1, note 15.

numerous than in a transparent situation. These statements are a necessary prelude to the description of the construction of this data.

The *Index* has existed since the early 1930s, but an electronic version has only been available since 1979. Complete information about its history can be found on UNESCO's web site:<sup>1</sup> in 1931, the first initiative came from the League of Nations Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, following requests from international organizations of authors, publishers and librarians of an international inventory of translations, for the purpose of providing immediate practical information. The *Index Translationum* came out in the form of a quarterly bulletin and included the translations published in six countries: Germany, Spain, France, United Kingdom, Italy and the United States of America. By the time it ceased publication in January 1940, just months after the outbreak of World War II, it already included information for fourteen countries. Almost ten years elapsed before the *Index* re-appeared under the auspices of UNESCO. A recommendation put forward at the Conference of the Allied Ministers of Education, which was held in London on 28th June 1945, led to the re-launching of the project and the resumption of the publication of the *Index Translationum*. This recommendation was approved by the First General Conference on the newly created UNESCO that took place in Paris in November and December 1946. It was then reaffirmed at the Organization's third General Conference in December 1948, when the Director General was mandated to lend his assistance to resuming publication of the *Index Translationum*. The new series came out in a single volume, which was published yearly. The first volume, in 1948, listed 8,570 translations published in twenty-six countries, including Brazil, Canada, Chile, Egypt and Turkey. There was a noticeable change in scale from the post-war, on the one hand, due to the development of worldwide publishing activity and, on the other hand, to the growing number of states.

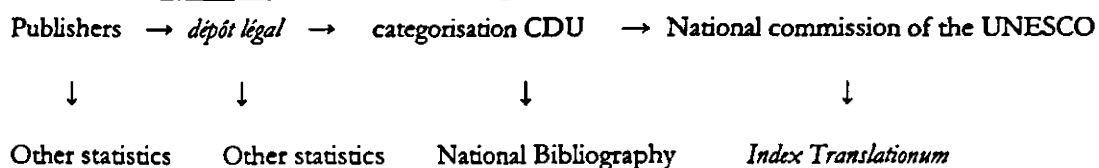
Today, the *Index Translationum* is fully updated each year with at least 100,000 new references. It is important to note that, since 1979, the editions have been cumulative; in 1979 the *Index* finally was computerized and became the largest of the UNESCO databases in terms of the volume of information. UNESCO's Sector for Culture is in charge of collecting, normalising, entering and checking the data. It is also responsible for constantly updating the *Index Translationum* database (XTRANS).

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<sup>1</sup>[http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php@URL\\_ID=11558&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php@URL_ID=11558&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)



The following scheme illustrates the process of constructing the data for the case of France:



The most problematic operation is that of the CDU categorisation. When a book arrives at the National library, it is registered and the person in charge of the registration is supposed to decide which category it belongs to. There are easy cases (such as school books, history or arts, sciences), but there are also borderline ones. For instance, a book of philosophy of religion could be in category 1 (philosophy, psychology) or 2 (religion, theology). Similarly, a novel relating travel experiences could be in the category 823 (novels, short stories, tales) or 91 (geography, travel). These two examples show that the options do not always concern two sub-categories for the same main category. For instance, between 823 and 824 (essays, varia, discourse, humour) there are many possibilities of overlap, but this has no consequence for the *Index Translationum* as both belong to category 8 (literature). Consequently, the Universal Decimal Classification is in itself problematic, as with any classification of the books by genre. Moreover, we also have to take into account the professional identity of the person who is in charge of the categorisation of the books, such as his or her background and the biases that this may imply. A historian would tend to classify more books in category 9 (geography, history), for instance, because he would be more receptive to the historical aspects of books.<sup>1</sup>

Another difficulty should be mentioned, that does not only relates to the French case but also to the *Index* in general. In fact, there is an international ranking in the sensitivity of the construction of the book statistics, which is not the same for all countries. For instance, for some countries who are in a process of democratic transition, the fact of furnishing an exhaustive list can be a proof of adaptation to the exigencies of an international organisation. For other countries, this can testify to the accuracy of the national statistics. For instance, the woman in charge of the *Index* at UNESCO told me that the Italians never send the data in time, and that it is incomplete most of the time. In her opinion, this testifies to a lack of seriousness in the referencing of the books. For other countries that used to do the same, she noticed an improvement in the recent years, and she interpreted it as a major concern for the accuracy of the data, that could be

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, this influence is not as direct as presented here, it is a subtle line between objectivity and personalisation of the work.

cultural, political or statistical. Overall, the issues at stake in the construction of these statistics differ from one country to another:

Beyond the problems directly related to the construction of the *Index*, another issue should be considered, that of the distinction between languages and the countries of publication.<sup>1</sup> If we look at the statistics by languages of translation, they include the data furnished by several countries according to the language. For instance, for Italian, the data is provided by Italy and Switzerland, for Spanish by Spain and all of the Spanish-speaking South-American countries, in German by Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Switzerland. Furthermore, some books are published in a foreign language. For instance, India publishes a certain number of books in English. These cases are marginal for non widespread languages, but they are statistically relevant for English (and to a certain extent for French). When we look at the data per language, we thus ignore the problems inherent in the national commissions, and this calls increased caution regarding the results. From our perspective, this mainly concerns English, as there are large differences in the number and the nature of publications in the United Kingdom and in the United States. In particular, as far as literature is concerned, the American publishing world is more active than the British one, particularly as regards commercial literature as it is less inclined to publish literature provided with high symbolic prestige. This kind of differences does not appear when we look at the statistics by language. Conversely, if we look at the publications in a specific country, the fact that the readers in this country have access to more books (those published in the same language but in another country) does not appear. There are two ways of using the *Index*, and both ways correspond to specific questions.

#### Why start the statistical analysis in 1988?

The fact that we started the statistical analysis of chapter one in 1988 could indicate that this date corresponds to a turning point, either in book flows or in the way of measuring them. In reality, there was no rupture, it could be argued that a change occurred which may have influenced the reliability of the data. We saw above that every year a letter was sent to the competent body of each of the 184 countries who contribute to the *Index*, via the National Commissions of the UNESCO. In the 1980s, the phrasing of this letter did not indicate anything regarding the exhaustiveness of the data. However, since 1987 it specifies that "all the documents entered at the National libraries during the year" should be referenced. This means that there is a concern for exhaustiveness that was not clearly stated beforehand. Therefore, we can assume that the data is more complete and coherent after 1987. However, it is difficult to measure the impact

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<sup>1</sup> In chapter one, both perspectives were used for different purposes.

of such a change, because we would need to compare the data for a large number of countries, which would represent a huge amount of work.

The choice of 1988 as a starting point can be justified in another way. In chapter one, we not used the *Index* as unique source, especially we also had a set of UNESCO statistics regarding national book production. A lot of figures were missing from this data for before 1988, which led us to reduce the analysis to the period for which more data was available.

Finally, as we are looking at France, it was impossible to ignore the lack of coherency of French data until the middle of the 1980s, and not only as regards Italian literature. As mentioned in Annex one, there was a change in method of coding in September 1986. The French national library decided to use the latest version of the Universal Decimal Classification that was more precise than the previous one. As regards literature, the category previously defined as 83 became 823; there was no change in the content of the category, the operation took more time and thus created "delays of adaptation". This means that in the two or three years after 1986 there are a significant number of books that still are in the wrong category. Initially, it seemed that this problem could be resolved by adding the results of two searches, one for the category 83 and the other for the category 823, but the person in charge of the national bibliography at the National Library claimed the contrary. The data only were completely reliable after 1991 (see Annex 1), however, from 1988 onwards we can assume that these data can be used to look at general trends. This is relevant here to the extent that the National Library is the competent French body that furnishes the UNESCO with the data for the *Index Translationum*.

This section aimed to present the construction of the *Index Translationum* and the problems risen by its utilisation. Overall, it is rather incomplete and it contains mistakes, however it can be used for the deciphering of trends in translations. In conclusion, we will give some final proof for the lack of reliability of these datum: between 2000 and 2003, relevant changes occurred, that not only regarded these three years. For instance, with regard to the literary translations from Italian into French, there were 58 in 2000 and 70 in 2003 for the year 1983, 138 in 2000 and 147 in 2003 the for year 1996. This database is apparently in constant evolution, which could mean that at some point it will be updated correctly.

### **ANNEXE 3: THE 33 PUBLISHERS WHO PUBLISHED MOST ITALIAN NOVELS, 1982-2001**

The first column indicates, when available, the date of creation of the publishing house, and the second its location. In the third one, "evolution", there are four cases: "increase" (symbolised by ↑), which means that the publisher has published more and more Italian novels on the period and "decrease" (symbolised with ↓) in the opposite case. For some of them, the publications have remained more or less stable ("stable", symbolised with →); for the others, it is difficult to observe any regular evolution ("oscillation", symbolised with ~). The fourth and fifth columns indicates the maximum number of books published in one year, and the date in which it occurred. Next, the date of first publication of an Italian novel (from 1900) and the total number of books published before and after 1982 are indicated in columns 5, 6 and 7 (column 8 shows the total amount of books published between 1900 and 2001). Finally, the last two columns indicate who is in charge of the diffusion and distribution of the publishers.

Publisher	Date of creation	Location	Trend	maxi	date(s) maxi	1st book ever	1900-1982	1982-2001	1900-2001	Diffusion	Distribution
Gallimard	1911	Paris 7	↑	17	1993	1927	126	201	327	Gallimard	Sodis
Seuil	1935	Paris 6	↑	11	1995, 1996, 1998	1951	71	137	208	Seuil	Seuil
Payot & Rivages	1912	Paris 6	↑	11	1999	1917	8	79	87	Seuil	Seuil
LGF	1953	Paris 15	~	9	1990	1953	48	76	124	Hachette	Hachette
10 18	1952	Paris 13	~	8	1 984	1964	6	56	62	Vivendi	Vivendi
Bourgois	1966	Paris 7	~	6	1994	1972	1	48	49	Seuil	Seuil
Flammarion	1876	Paris 6	~	7	1991	1923	50	45	95	UD Union	UD Union
Grasset	1907	Paris 6	~	5	1989	1919	28	45	73	Hachette	Hachette
Actes Sud	1978	Arles	~	6	1996	1982	0	42	42	Actes Sud	UD Union
Fayard	1857	Paris 6	~	6	1989	1932	11	40	51	Hachette	Hachette
Verdier	1978	Lagrasse	~	6	1989	1984	0	35	35	CDE	Sodis
Pocket	1962	Paris 13	~	4	1994	1982	0	27	27	Vivendi	Vivendi
Laffont Robert	1941	Paris 8	→	3	1993, 1998	1947	45	26	71	Vivendi	Vivendi
Denoël	1930	Paris 6	→	4	1985	1931	62	25	87	Gallimard	Sodis
Albin Michel	1901	Paris 14	~	5	2000	1919	54	25	79	Hachette/Albin Michel	Hachette
Allia	1982	Paris 4	~	6	1996	1989	0	23	23	Harmonia Mundi	Harmonia Mundi
Mille et une nuits	1993	Paris 6	→	5	1999	1993	0	22	22	Hachette	Hachette
Le Promeneur		Paris 6	↓	5	1989, 1990	1988	0	21	21	Quai Voltaire	Sodis
Le grand livre du mois	1977	Paris 1	↑	5	2000	1993	0	20	20	Le grand livre du mois	
Métailié	1979	Paris 6	~	3	2000, 2001	1984	0	19	19	Seuil	Seuil
Liana Levi	1982	Paris 5	~	3	1993	1983	0	18	18	Seuil	Seuil
Plon	1845	Paris 6	→	4	1999	1903	50	17	67	Vivendi	Vivendi
Desjonquères	1979	Paris 3	↓	3	1985, 1988	1985	0	17	17	PUF	PUF
Stock	1710	Paris 6	→	4	1994	1923	23	15	38	Hachette	Hachette
Hachette	1826	Paris 15	→	8	1998	1900	23	15	38	Hachette	Hachette
POL	1983	Paris 6	~	2	1990-1993, 1995	1987	0	14	14	CDE	Sodis
Julliard	1948	Paris 8	↓	3	1988	1957	22	13	35	Vivendi	Vivendi
Fleuve noir	1949	Paris 13	↑	4	2001	1965	1	13	14	Vivendi	Vivendi
La fosse aux ours	1997	Lyon	↑	3	2001	1997	0	12	12	Harmonia Mundi	Harmonia Mundi
France-Loisirs	1970	Paris 15	→	5	1995	1974	7	12	19	France Loisirs	France Loisirs
J'ai Lu	1958	Paris 13	→	3	1987	1960	11	11	22	UD Union	UD Union
Quai Voltaire	1944		~	3	1989	1987	0	10	10	CDE	Sodis
Ombres			→	2	1995	1989	0	10	10		



#### ANNEXE 4: CAMILLERI AND THE QUESTION OF TRANSLATION

We saw in chapter seven that the two main translators of Camilleri's novels into French have made very different choices as regards the translation of the dialectal words. This difference has turned into a real debate among the specialists. During the interviews, they often gave us their opinion spontaneously. Most of the time, they either defended one translator or simply described the conflict.

"Camilleri me semble être bien lu en France... En plus, il pose le problème de la traduction, les deux traducteurs peuvent pas se piffrer, ils s'accusent de tous les maux... Bon, il y a de la jalousie, parce qu'il y en a un qui connaît mieux Camilleri que l'autre, c'est insondable!" (Yves Tessarin)

"A l'époque, un traducteur avait spontanément proposé un texte, mais je ne l'avais pas aimé. On nous avait alors conseillé Daniel Buisson. Le premier, *La concession du téléphone*, il l'avait écrit en français, sans équivalent pour le sicilien. Puis il a commencé le travail avec le lyonnais. Maintenant, il y a deux écoles, on est pour ou contre. Selon moi, Daniel Buisson a réussi à rendre l'impression que les gens ont en lisant Camilleri en italien. Mais il y a des gens qui préfèrent François Léandre, c'est une question de goût. Maintenant il existe même une troisième traduction, encore différente, où des mots sont inventés." (Myriam Couratier)

These two pieces show that people take certain positions within the field, and that it is a dialectical situation. We shall present François Léandre and Daniel Buisson's views of the situation, as they both let us how they had come to make their choices.

"En tous cas, à ce moment-là, moi j'ai téléphoné... enfin, j'avais eu des échanges téléphoniques avec Jean-Marc Robert, qui à l'époque était chez Fayard, il s'occupait de ça, et je lui avait dit, euh... bon, de toutes façons, si vous voulez le publier très vite, moi j'ai un programme de traduction, par ailleurs je suis auteur, j'ai des choses à écrire, j'ai du boulot, euh... je pense pas que je pourrai traduire tout Camilleri en trois mois, enfin, tous les Camilleri que vous voulez traduire maintenant, donc... et d'autre part je suis pas propriétaire de Camilleri, euh... simplement je pense que c'est un auteur important... Je pense pas que c'est un très grand auteur mais je pense que c'est un auteur important et je pense qu'il mérite d'être transmis aux lecteurs français dans les meilleures conditions possibles... et je pense que ce serait bien que les différents traducteurs se rencontrent et se mettent d'accord sur une espèce de grammaire de Camilleri... une manière de le traduire. Il m'a dit "oui oui, c'est une très très bonne idée", et puis j'en ai plus jamais entendu parler. Et puis, après, cette histoire a traîné parce que bon, Jean-Marc Robert est parti entre temps et puis... l'Italien donc j'ignore le nom, je l'ai su mais j'ai oublié... euh... je crois que c'était un italien qui était allé négocier les droits parce que, donc, Fayard avait acheté *La concession du téléphone*... euh, a rendu une si mauvaise traduction qu'elle a été refusée et Fayard s'est mis en quête d'un autre traducteur... et qu'entre temps ils ont embauché Daniel Buisson, qui est un brillant universitaire agrégé d'italien, et qui est persuadé qu'il n'y a que les universitaires qui peuvent faire les traductions, qu'il y a qu'eux qui connaissent l'italien. Personnellement, je pense que c'est une erreur, parce que, d'une part je pense qu'il est évident qu'il faut bien connaître la langue et le contexte culturel. Mais d'autre part je pense que dans la traduction il y a une part de création littéraire et que cette part de création littéraire ne s'apprend pas à l'université. Donc, euh... donc moi je m'inquiétais un peu... donc j'ai téléphoné... donc j'ai fini par savoir que c'était Daniel Buisson et par avoir son numéro de téléphone, et je l'ai appelé, très ... la bouche en cœur... lui disant, voilà, moi ce que je pense, je l'avais dit à JM Robert, je pense que ce qui serait bien, il faudrait qu'on se rencontre, qu'on se mette d'accord sur la façon... et j'ai eu affaire à quelqu'un qui avait l'air terrorisé à l'idée que je me permette de l'appeler... comme si il cherchait le piège

dans ce que je lui disais. Et... bon, c'est vrai, moi je raconte ça tout ça comme je l'ai vécu, après vous en faites ce que vous voulez... et donc j'ai eu le sentiment qu'il y avait... d'avoir affaire à un esprit concurrentiel euh... typique de l'université française, et de l'université en général. Et donc, non seulement il a pas donné suite, mais... après, l'ironie de l'histoire c'est que j'ai été invité à un colloque des italianistes de l'université française à Nanterre pour parler de ma traduction de Camilleri. Et, il y avait Daniel Buisson qui était là... donc j'ai fait une intervention et puis j'ai dit "je sais qu'il y a Daniel Buisson qui est là et qu'il est en train de traduire *La concession du téléphone*, alors j'aimerais bien qu'il dise aussi comment il s'y prend, qu'est-ce qu'il en pense"... et il a dit "ah non, je peux pas en parler, c'est une telle souffrance, la traduction, vous ne pouvez pas savoir". Moi qui fais de la traduction depuis 20 ans, je le prends pas au tragique comme il le prend apparemment, et puis... et après je l'ai coincé dans un couloir et je lui ai dit "quand même j'aimerais bien que vous me disiez ce que vous pensez de ma traduction, si vous pensez que c'est de la merde, si vous pensez que c'est bien mais". Ça m'intéresse, moi, ça m'intéressait d'avoir un échange professionnel, quoi! Et j'ai pas réussi à lui arracher un mot, c'était vraiment très énervant. Et depuis il a traduit *La saison de la chasse* en lyonnais et c'est vrai que moi les bras m'en tombent... je trouve ça... bon, moi j'ai pris des solutions qui sont très discutables, on m'a fait des critiques, j'ai fait ce que... mais j'ai l'impression... enfin, suivant ma sensibilité à moi ça correspond mieux à Camilleri, voilà, bon. Mais, en tout cas, c'est sûr que ça fonctionne mieux. J'ai le sentiment parce que dans toutes les rencontres que j'ai pu avoir avec des lecteurs ils me disent "mais qu'est-ce que c'est que ce truc?". C'est un peu ahurissant... parce que moi j'ai bien pris soin dans *La forme de l'eau* de dire que j'employais des mots du sud, des régionalismes du midi, mais à dessein j'en employais pas trop parce que je ne voulais pas transformer Montalbano en personnage de Pagnol... et lui, dans sa postface que j'ai à peine survolée parce que ça m'énervait, il met... qu'il fallait pas employer des mots du sud parce que Camilleri n'était pas Pagnol... AAAHHH! (rire) J'ai dit que je veux pas le faire, on me dit que je le fais, et je trouve pas que je le fais!" (François Léandre)

François Léandre insists on the fact that he has tried to begin a discussion with Daniel Buisson, however the latter refused it. In this way, he describes the other translator as if he would stand as an opponent or a kind of rival. The fact that most of their contact has taken place in public, during conferences, has probably contributed to the intensification of the debate among the specialists. Not surprisingly, Daniel Buisson relates the facts in a similar way.

"Oui, bon, alors le cas intéressant c'est sans doute *la Saison de la chasse*, de Camilleri. Donc, j'ai commencé à traduire Camilleri avec d'autres de ses romans qui m'ont été donnés par hasard. Plus exactement, le premier roman de Camilleri que j'ai traduit, *La concession du téléphone*, on m'a demandé de le faire... Fayard m'a demandé de le faire parce qu'ils n'étaient pas satisfaits de la traduction qui avait été faite par un autre traducteur, ça ne marchait pas, donc ils ont demandé à... pour vraiment être bien précis dans la genèse, ils ont demandé à un de leurs traducteurs habituels, qui est Henri Jouvenet, qui est un collègue à moi, s'il voulait le faire. Comme lui n'était pas disponible, il m'a demandé si je voulais faire ce travail ; donc là-dessus j'ai fait un essai d'une dizaine de pages, ça a plu, donc j'ai signé mon contrat. J'ai traduit comme ça le premier roman qui posait des problèmes... Camilleri pose des problèmes d'emploi de différentes strates de langue, et je les ai réglés d'une certaine façon, à savoir en utilisant beaucoup d'expressions imagées de la langue française. C'était une première étape, ensuite j'en ai traduit un autre, qui ne posait pas de problèmes de ce genre, et puis arrivés au troisième, qui était donc *la Saison de la chasse*, il y avait un vrai problème, puisque là je me retrouvais à devoir trouver une solution pour rendre le mélange de langue et de dialecte. Et le système du recours uniquement à des expressions imagées de la langue... nationale, ne suffisait plus. Donc je me suis demandé comment faire, et je me suis dit qu'on arrêta pas de rabâcher depuis des décennies qu'il n'y avait pas de langues régionales en France, et qu'en fait c'était faux. Donc je suis parti du principe que la grande différence tellement rabâchée que l'italien possède des dialectes, le français n'en possède pas, n'était pas si vraie. Pas



complètement fausse, mais pas si vraie. Donc à partir de là j'ai utilisé un parler que moi je connaissais puisqu'il est de famille et de ma région, à savoir le lyonnais, qui est une des variantes... enfin, une des formes du franco-provençal, qui offre un réservoir très important, lexical surtout... quelques différences syntaxiques, mais que j'ai pas trop utilisé, parce que le français est très frileux par rapport aux écarts grammaticaux et syntaxiques, donc très vite il y a un risque d'être perçu comme une incorrection, et à partir de là d'être invalidé... Donc j'ai surtout utilisé ce franco-provençal lyonnais pour les termes. Et j'ai bâti une traduction qui utilisait tout un répertoire, il y a à peu près 350 mots dans ce livre-là, qui ne sont pas du tout des mots de français national mais qui en fait sont des mots de lyonnais, qui ont beaucoup en commun, enfin en partie, avec le français tel qu'on le parlait entre le 14ème et le 16ème siècle. Donc ça ça a été ma décision. Quand j'ai commencé à essayer de mettre ça en pratique, bon, évidemment, j'ai demandé l'avis de mon éditeur, parce que je pouvais pas faire ça... d'abord c'était un énorme travail, et puis je pouvais pas faire ça sans son accord. Donc, même principe, j'ai lancé l'idée, ça a intéressé, j'ai fait un essai d'une dizaine de pages ; et on a soumis ça en lecture à la directrice d'édition, donc à Myriam Couratier, à Olivier Bétournay, à un ou deux collègues universitaires. L'ensemble de ces avis... tout ça se passe avec énormément, je dirais, de bienveillance... plus que ça, même, je dirais, c'est une coopération, vraiment un travail d'équipe... Donc, l'ensemble des avis étant plutôt favorable, tous disant bon, c'est un pari mais on est d'accord pour le prendre, et donc voilà. Donc je me suis lancé là-dedans. Donc, j'ai pris des cours, je me suis beaucoup documentée, j'ai travaillé d'arrache-pied. J'ai demandé... c'est pas un détail innocent, je crois, ou anodin... j'ai demandé une meilleure rétribution de façon à compenser la quantité de travail, ce qui a été très bien accepté par Fayard. D'ailleurs, je salue toujours, je dirais... leur sérieux éditorial... ils se donnent les moyens d'avoir des choses de qualité. Donc, j'ai fait ce travail en cinq ou six mois, et puis on a sorti cette traduction. Alors, comme évidemment on pouvait pas lancer le livre comme ça, on l'a accompagnée d'un certain nombre de choses, euh... pas vraiment une préface, parce que chez Fayard nous sommes opposés, en ce qui concerne les livres de Camilleri, à l'idée d'une préface, pour une raison très simple, c'est que Camilleri lui-même n'en fait jamais. Il y a souvent des notes d'auteur, mais en fin de livre, et c'est pas un hasard. Donc on n'a pas envie de se substituer à l'auteur, et d'imposer une préface. Donc, on ne voulait pas de préface. Mais d'un autre côté on se sentait quand même un peu embêtés de laisser le lecteur entrer dans le bouquin sans aucun avertissement ; parce que, en Italie, quand le lecteur commence un livre de Camilleri, il sait qu'il va trouver un dépaysement linguistique. Donc là on a fait un... on a fait une toute petite note, un avertissement du traducteur de... huit lignes, je crois, j'ai fait le plus court possible, juste pour alerter le lecteur, voilà, il y a des mots pas normaux dans ce texte, mais c'est normal ! Après il y a la traduction, et puis donc ensuite on a placé une postface. J'ai demandé à l'éditeur de pouvoir placer une postface pour pouvoir expliquer mon travail, parce que c'était quand même une démarche très particulière, et que je trouvais être finalement pas si souvent que ça employée, et que c'était bon finalement que je puisse faire un peu le point là-dessus. Donc j'ai fait une postface d'une huitaine de pages qui permet d'expliquer, premièrement, ce qu'est la langue de Camilleri pour les français qui ne s'en rendent pas compte, évidemment. Et deuxièmement, d'expliquer les choix que j'ai fait, en donnant toute une série d'exemples précis pour rendre compte de mon atelier de traduction auprès des lecteurs qui auraient pu en avoir la curiosité. Donc ça ça a été le premier bouquin... donc ensuite, au niveau de la presse, donc, l'attachée de presse a essayé de défendre ça au mieux, c'était pas évident comme pari. Il y a eu pas mal... on peut même dire beaucoup de presse, ça a quand même suscité beaucoup de curiosité. Dans l'ensemble plutôt des bonnes réactions ; d'autres, aussi, de journalistes qui n'étaient pas convaincus. Je crois que dans l'ensemble le pari était fort, de toutes façons, je crois pas que ça pouvait obtenir l'unanimité, ça a fait... bon, on en a parlé. Ici en Rhône-Alpes on en a parlé plutôt bien... et, que dire d'autre... que l'auteur est plutôt content du résultat ! Je l'ai tenu au courant, ça ça a été l'un des éléments de la démarche. Avant qu'on décide de faire comme ça j'ai contacté Camilleri, je lui ai envoyé une dizaine de pages, j'ai mis en évidence les termes dialectaux français, je lui ai demandé un peu ce qu'il en pensait. Et lui m'a dit qu'il était très content que je tente cette voix-là.

*D'accord. Parce que, si je ne me trompe pas, en fait c'était une démarche assez différente de celle qui avait été adoptée auparavant par François Léandre...*

Qui était complètement différente, oui, pour la simple raison qu'il y a un certain nombre de choses que je ne voulais pas faire, en particulier des déformations de mots, des déformations phonétiques arbitraires, c'est à dire calquées sur l'italien mais ne correspondant pas à des structures françaises... au pire, j'ai envie de dire, des déformations qui avaient... qui ont tendance à renvoyer à une prononciation du français, on va dire, entre guillemets, à la petit nègre... et que je voulais absolument éviter, pour ne pas donner aux personnages de Camilleri un visage de comportements

linguistiques de personnages incapables de bien maîtriser une langue. Parce que c'est absolument le contraire, les personnages de Camilleri maîtrisent au moins deux langues, parfois trois, donc ils sont des experts linguistiques, et pas du tout des malhabiles de ce côté là, et pour moi c'était important d'éviter ça. Et puis, bon, pour ce qui est de l'utilisation d'un parler local, François Léandre lui-même affirme qu'il emploie parfois des mots de parler régional français. Bon, moi j'ai pas lu toutes ses traductions, j'ai l'impression qu'il y en a de toutes façons très peu quand même, et puis récemment, sans doute en réaction... enfin, peut-être en réaction aux choix que j'ai fait, il a très très... enfin, avec beaucoup de décision, affirmé que le choix d'un parler local pour traduire Camilleri était une erreur. Donc je pense que lui désormais n'emploie plus... enfin j'imagine ! de mots provençaux ou autres dans ses traductions.

*Un vrai débat...*

Oui ! Enfin, non, pas vraiment, le vrai débat j'aurais bien aimé l'avoir... pour le moment ce qui se passe c'est plutôt... j'ai plutôt eu l'occasion désagréable d'entendre des choses très négatives de François Léandre sur mon travail sans me citer, en restant dans le vague, mais de façon extrêmement négative... et pour ma part j'ai, à un colloque à Palerme au mois de mars... il y a eu un colloque international sur Camilleri, j'ai fait une intervention sur la traduction en français, en posant tous mes présupposés et toutes mes solutions, et en demandant à avoir un débat, et j'ai pas eu de débat ! donc, j'attends le débat... François Léandre était dans la salle mais il a souhaité parler d'autre chose, son intervention... il n'a pas souhaité qu'il y ait un débat. C'était quelque chose de très délicat à faire mais qui, je pense, pourrait être très positif. Voilà. Et pour ce qui est de *la Saison de la chasse*, pour aller jusqu'au bout du parcours du bouquin, on peut dire qu'il a suscité quand même des curiosités de la part des lecteurs, j'ai été appelée dans différentes bibliothèques et institutions culturelles pour exposer ma démarche. Et puis j'ai continué, j'ai fait un deuxième livre de Camilleri sur le même principe, *Un filet de fumée*, qui est sortie cette année à l'occasion du salon du livre. Là, pour le coup, on n'a plus fait de postface, on a juste remis, si j'ai bonne mémoire, une petite note de trois lignes pour informer, et encore j'en suis même pas sûre.. je reprends le bouquin, je l'ai sous les yeux, parce que là je travaille sur autre chose... *Filet de fumée*, non, on n'a rien mis du tout, on a mis en fait une note du traducteur à la fin, mais qui était nécessaire pour introduire le glossaire. Oui, voilà, ce que j'ai oublié de vous dire pour *La saison de la chasse*, c'est qu'avant la postface on a mis un glossaire des termes que j'avais employé. Et ce problème du glossaire est un problème que Camilleri lui-même avait abordé pour ses bouquins, et donc j'ai fait une petite note à ce sujet. Et puis maintenant, la troisième étape, je dirais, puisque c'est un ensemble, la conséquence, c'est que le bouquin de Camilleri que je traduis en ce moment, qui s'appelle *Rè di Girgenti*... c'est plus le dernier publié, maintenant, c'est l'avant-avant dernier... il publie énormément ! C'est son dernier gros bouquin, il y a 450 pages chez Sellerio, il arrête pas de répéter que c'est pour lui son bouquin le plus important et où il a encore modifié ses choix linguistiques en accentuant de façon radicale l'emploi du dialecte, tout en employant des formes archaïsantes. Donc on est pour la première fois dans un bouquin qui se passe beaucoup plus tôt dans le temps que d'habitude, à la fin du 17ème siècle. Et moi je me suis retrouvé à tout reprendre à zéro puisque ma solution précédente, à mon avis, ne pouvait plus marcher. Donc, encore une fois, j'ai réfléchi et je me suis dit que la solution c'était de continuer à utiliser le parler franco-provençal, qui est une vraie mine, mais aussi d'aller chercher ce qu'on appelle le français moyen, entre 14ème et 16ème siècle. C'est-à-dire, non pas l'ancien français médiéval, mais le français tel qu'il était employé avant la grande codification qui a permis de rentrer dans le français classique, donc cette tranche-là.

Et j'ai fait des essais, même principe, j'ai fait lire, on s'est concertés, on en a parlé avec Claude Durand, et j'ai eu le feu vert, donc je me suis lancé. Et là c'est encore pire qu'avant !!! Je mets une heure pour faire deux phrases. Enfin, maintenant je vais un tout petit peu plus vite. Je travaille en faisant une vraie marqueterie entre français contemporain et français moyen, enfin, ancien, pas vraiment du vieux français... et puis, je ne m'interdis pas, quand c'est possible, d'employer aussi du parler lyonnais.

*Quel travail !*

Oui, c'est du travail. Mais j'avoue que je n'en suis pas mécontent, et puis au quotidien, parce que j'ai quand même besoin d'encouragements... j'ai des lecteurs fidèles à qui je soumetts ça régulièrement pour tester, pour voir si ça marche... et pour le moment ça a l'air de marcher, donc je suis partie dans l'aventure des 450 pages en espérant que ça plaira au grand public."

(Daniel Buisson)

From this long excerpt, the emphasis is on both the relationship with François Léandre and on the reasons for choosing the Lyon dialect in the translation of some of Camilleri's novels, as opposed to Léandre's use of phonetic deformations. This argument is used by some of the other interviewees:

*"Qu'est-ce que vous auriez fait sur Camilleri?"*

Bonne question! Par exemple, j'aurais pas essayé d'imiter un accent... je trouve que Sylvain Renucci ((grimace!))... bon, je sais que dans une traduction il essaye de reproduire l'accent toscan en enlevant les "C"... Bon, "tu es un -on", en français ça veut rien dire... D'un autre côté, c'est pas facile, parce que c'est vrai qu'il y a plusieurs personnes qui parlent avec un accent différent... Mais bon, tous les textes de Camilleri ne sont pas comme ça, il y a des textes où il y a juste quelques expressions, là j'aurais inventé des mots... il y a des textes où c'est plus parlé... si ça s'y prêtait, j'aurais mis de l'argot... je connais pas assez bien Camilleri pour le dire." (Laure Fougère)

"Enfin, bon... Je sais pas, je viens de lire en français une traduction de Camilleri par François Léandre, c'était le *Birraio di Preston*, j'étais absolument effarée, parce que bon, il y a une page, l'avant-propos, où il explique les choix qu'il a fait. Entre autres, pour rendre le toscan, un des personnages est toscan, il reproduit le son toscan en enlevant le C. Par exemple, il écrit CON en enlevant le C, en mettant l'apostrophe. En français, ça dit rien à personne. Evidemment, si Camilleri a un sens en Italie, c'est que quand un toscan parle, il y a pas seulement un son. Ça évoque un univers, ça évoque un son, une musique, une culture. Alors qu'en français, enlever le C, ça n'a aucun sens. Alors, qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire à la place, c'est pas à moi de vous dire, c'est au traducteur. Bon, ce qu'a fait Daniel Buisson, certains sont sceptiques, moi j'ai pas lu... Il faut trouver des solutions." (Sandra Di Maggio)

These two interviewees denounce Léandre's use of phonetic transformations, but they do not defend Buisson's choice. This shows that the positions within the field are usually more complex than a simple case of "for Buisson/against Léandre" or the inverse. In fact, the issues addressed by the translation of Camilleri are complex and to the extent that no solution is totally satisfactory, there are many ways of proceeding. However, in some cases, the attack against Léandre was quite strong.

*"En même temps, il y a aussi la question des dialectes. Prenez la polémique sur Camilleri. Qu'est-ce qu'on fait?"*

On invente une langue, mais on joue pas à mettre des langues du sud, du nord, etc. J'ai pas lu les traductions de Camilleri, mais c'est le même traducteur dont je vous parlais tout à l'heure [pour en critiquer les compétences].

Oui, mais il y a aussi une traductrice qui a utilisé du dialecte lyonnais.

Oui, mais ça c'est du jeu. Alors, je sais pas, on va pas... La traduction, c'est très difficile. Bénis soient les traducteurs, tous, mais qu'ils se rendent compte qu'ils peuvent assassiner un auteur, ils peuvent le faire disparaître en étant trop légers."

(Jean-Charles Zalio)

Zalio apparently has a problem with Léandre and accuses him of damaging the author's work (it is not very clear whether he refers to Camilleri or to the author that he mentioned earlier in the interview). It is clear from this piece that he does not justify his position. Similarly, he does not show why he supports Buisson's position. However, other interviewees expressed quite different opinions.

*"Et la solution du dialecte lyonnais, ça vous paraît comment?"*

Moi je trouve ça bizarre. Il y a aucun rapport. Le dialecte, ça charrie quand même pas mal de connotations socioculturelles d'un pays. Donc, introduire des connotations socioculturelles lyonnaises dans une réalité sicilienne, je trouve ça un peu curieux. Et c'est un patois qui n'est pas parlé, enfin, pas tous les jours. Donc, je comprends ce qu'elle a voulu faire, et après tout chacun fait ce qui veut... Après tout, il y a des gens qui trouvent ça idiot, ce que je fais d'inventer des mots, chacun a ses partis pris. C'est justement le seul cas où le traducteur intervient à part entière. Et le lecteur, est-ce qu'il se rend compte quand il voit un mot étrange que c'est du dialecte, je sais pas... mais c'est le seul cas où le traducteur prend une initiative, il dit, bon, moi j'ai un parti à prendre, voilà ce que je choisis. Et là, c'est pareil, il y a des querelles, c'est ridicule! Chacun fait ce qui veut. Moi je respecte le traducteur qui a mis du dialecte lyonnais, si il pense que c'est juste, très bien pour lui. Moi je l'aurais pas fait, mais on peut pas jeter la pierre..." (Laure Fougère)

Laure Fougère, who is also a translator, is more moderate in her views; she argues that any choice of translation needs to be respected. However, she still criticizes the use of the Lyon dialect. This is also the view expressed by Yves Tessarin.

"Camilleri, il commence à se vendre. Alors, moi je suis très sceptique sur Camilleri. J'aime pas du tout le commissaire Montalbano, mais en revanche j'aime beaucoup les chroniques de Vigata, ça c'est un truc qui me rend plein de bonheur. Sauf, il y en a un qui m'a un peu énervé, de bouquin, parce qu'il y avait ce lexique... de français lyonnais, ce qui me semble être une erreur éditoriale. C'est-à-dire, bien sûr qu'il a un parler ancien, etc., mais les gens, quand ils lisent Camilleri... Est-ce qu'il était dans la version italienne, le glossaire?"

*Non.*

Donc, vous rajoutez un truc, le parler lyonnais, et vous rajoutez quelque chose qui n'existe pas, vous n'en avez pas besoin. Il fallait trouver de l'argot... mais... le parler lyonnais, moi je suis lyonnais je le connais pas, donc faut aller se reporter à un glossaire, qu'est-ce que c'est?" (Yves Tessarin)

All of these pieces show that most of the interviewees had strong opinions about Camilleri's translations. This can be explained by the fact that this author's novels are characterised by an unusual and complex linguistic configuration.

"Et là il y a à expliquer un certain nombre de choses, et je ne suis pas certain - je suis même certain du contraire - que tous les critiques littéraires aujourd'hui sont conscients de ce qu'est cette langue de Camilleri au départ. Et c'est pour ça que j'ai fait la postface de *La saison de la chasse*, où j'essaye de bien expliquer, à l'intérieur de la langue italienne d'une part, à l'intérieur de la langue de Camilleri d'autre part, ce qu'est la langue et le style de Camilleri. A partir de là, à partir de cette description, on peut discuter. Je dis, voilà quels sont les choix et tous... pourquoi pas, après chacun va défendre ses choix... en traduction il y a pas de science infuse,

mais il y a quand même... Il faut être sûr qu'on parle bien des mêmes choses au départ. Or, pour revenir à ce que je disais sur le fait... qu'on croit trop savoir ce qu'est la langue italienne... et bien il y a une méconnaissance de ce qu'est la relation langue dialecte chez les gens qui traitent de critique littéraire en France... Ca existe aussi pour d'autres langues..."  
(Daniel Buisson)

Daniel Buisson himself describes the paradox which is at the basis of the contest. On the whole, this debate is interesting from our perspective for two reasons. Firstly, it shows how different the linguistic situations in France and in Italy are, and the issues this raises in terms of translation. Second, it illustrates the fact that the specialists of Italian literature in France constitute a closed field that continues to carry on internal debates and to defend diverse positions.



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